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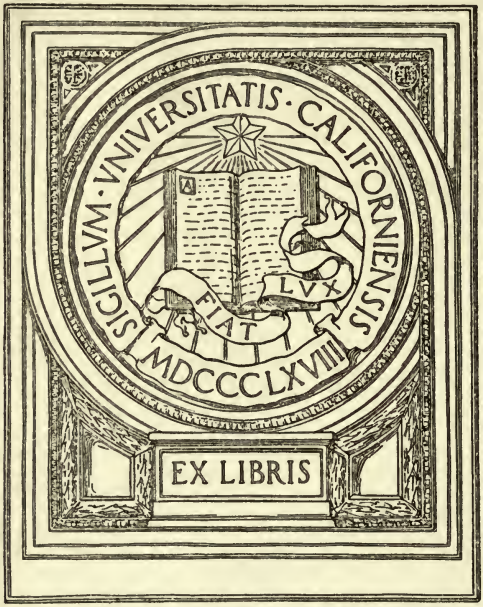

THE LORDS OF DAWN

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THE LORDS OF DAWN

A NOVEL

By GEORGE TURNER MARSH
And RONALD TEMPLE
With ILLUSTRATIONS By
CHIURA OBATA

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BEFORE THE CURTAIN

THIS tale aims to picture the awakening Japan—the Japan of the period that begins with the year 1854, and ends with the year 1890. The scene of the Prologue is laid at Yedo in the year 1854; that of Part I at Lake Biwa and Yedo, 1854-1868, and that of Part II at Tokyo, Satsuma, Lake Biwa, and Washington, D. C., 1875-1890.

The Mikado has always been recognized as the ruler by divinity, claiming descent from Ama-terasu, the Sun Goddess. In 1192 a dual system of government was formed by Yori-tomo, who, upon his overcoming the powerful Taira family, received the special court title of Shogun. This also created him military ruler, from

360618

which time, under the direction of succeeding Shoguns, the Nation was governed continuously by various powerful families till the year 1868; when the Imperial adherents overcoming the Shogunate, the Mikado re-assumed the sole active government of the country.

As the Proscenium of the Theatre lights up, and the Orchestra commences attuning its instruments, the mind of the Audience focuses expectantly upon the unfolding of the plot, and the sustaining of the various roles by the actors.

The curtain is rising upon an entirely new Drama in the Theatre of Life. Heretofore its music has been interpreted by Occidental ears, in the booming of cannon and clash of steel. But there is an underlying motif, deeper, greater, and more truly humane — undistinguishable by those ignorant of Japanese melody — and this motif carries in it no suggestion of the Battle Marches of other Nations of the Great World. As to the manner in which the actors of this Drama sustain their roles, the World must be the judge. In this book both historical events and characters represent National conditions solely; yet it would be but a sorry Play that contained in its unfolding nothing of the greatest of all human passions and incentives — Love.

THE AUTHORS.

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THE LORDS OF DAWN

Wake! for the Sun who scattered into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

CHARACTERS

Asano Yo-Akè, The Lord of Moto and Shima.

Tokiyori, his son.

Suki Shimadzu, Lord Suzerain of Tsushima.

Kiku-Ko (chrysanthemum), his daughter.

Nakahara, a Seer.

Lord Saito, of Satsuma.

His Illustrious Highness, Prince Matsuo Goto, once Lord of the North.

Taro, his nephew.

Nui-Ko san } Sisters.
Toyo-Ko san }

Saburo-Ikeda, once of the Shogun's *Baka-fu.*

Ren-Ko (Lotus), The Breath of Mukojima, his Daughter.

Lord Sakurai, of Niijima.

Midzu-Hara, a Protege of Dawn.

Mata, his Stepfather; Captain of the Yo-Akè *samurai.*

Yamaki, Proprietor of the *yadoya,* Ko-Matsu.

Tanaka, Host of the two houses, *The Jewel River.*

A Gateman of the *O-mon* of Shima.

Aysia, also a Lord of Dawn.

Samurai; Servants; *Jinricksha* men; Villagers; *Hanashika; Oïran; Geisha; Hokan.*

⁂ At the end of the volume will be found a Glossary of the Japanese words and phrases used throughout the book.

PROLOGUE

Dreaming, when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky,
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

IT WAS the seventh day of the seventh month—in the Occidental manner of reckoning time, the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-four—and the fear tears of the rain goddess were drying fast, for the storm god had departed, traveling rapidly on beyond the outer harbor of Yedo bay, where Perry's flotilla of "Foreign" men-o'-war tugged menacingly at their moorings.

The typhoon which had raged for hours in and about the city of Yedo, the Estuary Gate, had spent itself, and passed on toward

where, faintly outlined by distance, Fuji-no-yama upshot its crest well into the veil of the evening.

A crow cawed cautiously, and but for the low moaning wail of the weary sea, blissful stillness reigned over the city, from the Shiba woodlands to where the dark Sumida flows.

Slow rose the moon—a Japan moon—dripping its water jewels through the Shiba foliage on the cairns of past and gone Shoguns of the Tokugawa house; until, finally, it shot through the sylvan bough fringe, penciling with the touch of a rare artist some near-by walls, reared to gird a noble castle. From these it glinted on the curved eaves of a low, rambling *nagaya,* or barracks, that seemed literally to grow into the very ramparts themselves, flooding the intervening space between them and the *yashiki,* or manor house, with liquid phosphorescence.

In an upper room of this yashiki two men—daimios, or nobles, evidently by dress, bearing and presence—were peering down through an open window to where, in the courtyard, and well within ear-shot, a group of castle retainers were gathered about an old man who sat, or rather squatted, upon a mat, puffing at his pipe.

"Tell us a legend, O Nakahara," requested a deep voice from among those who enclosed the old man in a rude sort of semi-circle; "a legend of samurai and sword."

"A-a-a-a!" chorused the bystanders.

Nakahara, the castle *hanashika,* or actor story-teller, scooped the embers in the brazier bowl of his *hibatchi,* and knocked the ashes from his pipe into the bamboo tube of his *tobakobon.* Then he bowed to the north, to the east, and finally sat gazing steadily westwards, so that his audience might know it was of that quarter he would tell.

"In the beginning," commenced Nakahara, quietly, "was the sword, and it was to the soul of the samurai as are the strings of a *koto* to the harper's fingers. For neither have in themselves any life, saving that which is drawn from the touch of a knight or minstrel.

"A great town once reared its golden walls to guard a faraway land, and a winding, oft-hidden roadway led to this City of De-

sire. Adown this glade had passed in their time many a prince, lord, soldier, beggar and son of toil, all intent upon reaching its gates. Yet, because the way was dark in parts, and fraught often with pitfalls, none had as yet come anigh to this Golden City.

"Now among the varied wayfarers who chanced along this road was a masterless samurai, who, having lately lost service through the disgrace of his lord, had turned ronin—'wave-man'—errant. And he, too, strove toward this City of Desire, hoping to place his sword at the service of, what he imagined, must be a most wondrous ruler. And so wrapt in his one purpose was this ronin samurai that he strode along heedless of all else until, at last, overcome with utter weariness, he sank upon the moss carpet that ran in strips along either side of this roadway. Reclining thus, he beheld other travelers struggling toward the same goal, some wandering across adjacent fields in search of shorter cuts, some lingering to sport with the little fish in the brooks and play with the flowers. But it was plain to him that none of these would ever attain thus to the golden City of Desire. And now the night was coming on apace, and still the gates of the city appeared as far from him as ever. Then spake the ronin samurai, and said:

"'This road leads to No-Land. The City of Desire is but a myth. And so do I perceive, at last, that the words of men are foul and of no light. For this roadway is but a wallow wherein do all who listen to that talk of foolishness become caught. And now that the red sun has sunk behind yon forest, I see that it is indeed but the beginning and ending of Naught. I can go neither backwards, nor forwards, nor may I remain where I now am. Therefore, there is left me but to commit the seppuku, and go to my fathers.'

"The ronin prepared to disembowel himself."

The wily old story-teller, well aware that his audience was excited to the highest pitch, broke off abruptly, making pretense that his hibatchi needed re-scooping. It was the culmination of his art.

Overhead, in the room of the yashiki where the paper-paned *shoji* stood ajar, the slightly elder of the two noblemen smiled, and turned his head toward his companion listener.

"A poor story," he observed, for he was the daimio, or lord of the great castle, and could not, of course, sound the praises of his

own servant, "yet, in a measure, very true to life. Like Nakahara's ronin, we each have in our material existences a very pregnant City of Desire, but how few of us ever realize its materialization. Humanly, the perfect City of Desire is rarely attainable; its pathway almost impregnable to mortal feet."

"Nay," replied the second nobleman, earnestly, "believe me, Yo-Akè, you err there. There exists, I am convinced, a broad, well-blazoned road to this City of Desire. In the past we have failed to find it because we have sought it by the aid of the sword alone. Yet I am sure there is a better, straighter and clearer way that leads to it. It may be discovered by those who will seek it with an humble purpose, diligently, warily and observantly. Your hanashika is looking up from his hibatchi. I think he will direct his ronin upon this road of which I speak."

The last speaker, Lord Suki Shimadzu, Suzerain of the Island Dependency of Tsushima, had voiced convictions that were almost occult in their presage. He was under immediate sentence of death from the Shogun, for having presumed to open his island port to "Foreign" traffic, while the question of the United States' demands, borne to Nippon by Commodore Perry, was yet undergoing debate. It was this, indeed, that had brought him from Tsushima on so unexpected a visit to Shima castle, within the Shiba woodlands in Yedo, and the corresponding consultation with his present companion, its master, Lord Asano Yo-Akè.

At last Nakahara's audience were beginning to evince a spirit of restiveness. A child on the outskirts of the crowd whimpered. Nakahara continued:

"Then, as the ronin turned the point of his sword toward his abdomen to disembowel himself, according to the honored rite of seppuku—thinking, thus only, to attain to the City of Desire—an old crow, perched in the branches overhead, cawed to him in this wise:

"'O samurai, be no longer blinded by the legends of the blade, for that way lie but the centuries that are gone, and thou would'st travel to the City of Desire.'

"'This road leads true, but thou hast become so enwrapt with the traditions of Bushido only, that other knowledge is hidden from thee.'

"'Cast away that sword, which serves now but to clog thy forward stride, and, forgetting that thou art a samurai, observe, as do the tillers of the fields, what hath gone before thee, and how.'

"'So, only, may'st thou find the road to this City of Desire.'

"'Often through tangle, quagmire, and wastes that are very foul and dangerous, does this road run. Yet must thou follow patiently, steadfastly and humbly, ever placing thy feet in the steps of those who have preceded thee, until thou can'st learn to walk along it alone. Thus shalt thou surely come at last to the City of Desire.'

"'But,' said the ronin samurai, 'how may I find the right direction?'

"'Thou shalt look into the Heavens,' quoth the crow, 'as the red sun wanes and droops. And there shalt thou behold three stars—HUMILITY, VIGILANCE and PROGRESSION. They shall be thy guidance, ever; and when thou hast followed the three to the end shall they lead thee to the City of Desire.'

"The crow, having spoken thus, flighted to a far-away copse, the clouds parting to let it through. In the rift the samurai beheld the sheen of the great city. The sun was flooding the ramparts and flashing on the headpieces of the warders who tramped their vigil-watches on the battlements. Then the day sank, and, saving for a wan handful of stars, all was darkness. The ronin looked to the north, to the east and to the west. And lo! three stars suddenly dropped earthwards to shoot their messages to him. Then the rift closed. The ronin, breaking his sword across his knee, arose.

"Said the ronin samurai, 'I follow'."

The dawn of the next day found but one of the two noblemen still in the overhead room of the yashiki in the Shiba woodlands—Lord Asano Yo-Akè, daimio of Shima castle. According to the ancient usages of the code of Bushido—that code which demanded the self-immolation of one of its order rather than public disgrace for offense given—Lord Shimadzu had committed seppuku, that is he had, by right of his rank, disemboweled himself in the presence of emissaries of the Shogun. Already had the Shogun's emissaries departed, leaving as the result of their visit the

headless trunk of Lord Suki Shimadzu—a cadet of the princely family of Satsuma—who had thus expiated his offense of opening his Island of Tsushima to "Foreign" traffic. In his hand Lord Yo-Akè held some newly sealed documents, which he thoughtfully perused. Of the contents of two he was aware. One appointed him guardian to the young lady Kiku-ko, the five-year old, parentless daughter of Lord Shimadzu. Another ratified a pact of marriage between this little girl and the only child of Lord Yo-Akè—Tokiyori, a lad of some sixteen years. The third, and last document, was a letter from her dying father to Kiku-ko, not to be opened until the eve of her marriage with Lord Yo-Akè's son. All three documents were in order, absolute and valid.

Lord Yo-Akè was pleased with them—that is, the two of whose contents he knew. The union of his son with Shimadzu's heiress would cement ties between his own family and that of the Prince of Satsuma. And, as chief councilor to the Shogun, he doubted not his ability to prevail upon the Tokugawa prince for the restoration of her father's estates to Kiku-ko, escheat to the Shogun because of the manner of Lord Shimadzu's death.

Yet, gratifying as were these documents to Lord Yo-Akè, his mind was heavily troubled because of the shadow thrown across the Island Empire by the flotilla of Commodore Perry, United States emissary to Nippon, whose visit he felt implied something beyond the courteous requests and demands made by that country, although what that "something" was he could not fathom.

"Beyond us," he reasoned, "lies a great sea; ri on ri of foaming, intervening waters. And, beyond that—what? Enlightenment? Yes, undoubtedly enlightenment—*then* power. Or how else could any one nation force our gates? Why do these 'Foreigners' come to our shores with their armaments and demands? They can have nothing in common with us, therefore *there must be something, yet hidden, they expect to gain from us.* It is that something we must seek and discover quickly. Some day, if we wait long enough, it may be made clear to us, yet some day is but the embryo in the laboring womb of today, and whether it will be still or living, who knows?"

He arose and paced the apartment restlessly.

"In the meantime," he continued, "these 'Foreigners' have come among us with the evident intention of staying. If we drive this tithe from our shores, an hundred will follow, and a thousand, and an hundred thousand; drifting here and there like the sea sands, and covering everything in their drift. But if we make them welcome now, they may in time come to have an affection for us. To them we, in our weakness, doubtless resemble children. Perchance they may think to teach our toddling feet to walk. Yet the babe grows strong when his time is come, and able to run swiftly when those who taught him can scarcely hobble."

A sudden inspiration came to him, and he bent his head while it took possession. It seemed to him as though a voice—the voice of his dead wife—had whispered. A moment he remained listening, then he raised his eyes to a little shrine in which was an *ihai* —a tablet—bearing her posthumous name, and before which a small lamp burned day and night.

"So be it, Ume-ko," he exclaimed suddenly, as though in answer. "Why should we wait so long for the knowledge we need so badly now? Our son shall journey to 'Foreign' lands to discover and bring home that secret to us."

Six weeks later a norimono—the counterpart of which is the sedan-chair used in the Occident in the eighteenth century, or the Eastern palanquin—stood, surrounded by an escort of samurai, on the beach at Nagasaki. A boat was plying between the landing and a three-masted sailing ship, from which flew the Dutch flag, the ship being apparently ready to heave anchor and stand out to sea. Near the norimono stood two men, Japanese—or, rather, a man and a boy, the former perhaps eight-and-thirty years of age, the younger possibly sixteen, slightly built and a trifle stoop shouldered. In repose the contour of their faces was markedly similar, saving that the boy's lacked somewhat the iron determination in the set jaws and lips of the man, and the latter's broad sweep of massive forehead. Yet in the features of the lad were neither effeminacy nor weakness, but rather a more studious, gentle purpose and personality, while finer lines of poetry and sentiment showed themselves in his deep-set eyes, sculptured in a softer portraiture

of the elder's, and in the over-sensitive droop of the mouth. A face, you would say, capable of great love and great suffering, coupled with a shy, almost shrinking disposition. The man addressed the boy in a low tone of voice.

"Tokiyori, my son, the moment for our farewells has come, and it will be long, I fear, before we set eyes upon each other again. Kano, our chief of household council, has arranged all matters for you pertaining to finances, so you need give yourself no uneasiness upon that score. In all things it is my desire that you bear yourself as a Yo-Akè. So much for the social side of your voyagings.

"But while your travels may appear to others as a mere pleasure visit by a young Nipponese nobleman to 'Foreign' capitols, there is a serious hidden issue involved in them, and it is this that will tax all your powers of observance, deduction and memory. Above all, and before all, I desire that with your return to me you shall bring with you a full and accurate account of, not only the social customs of the 'Barbarians,' but the political, military and geographical movements of the whole outer world. More particularly —and bear this well in mind, Tokiyori—there must be some one keynote to this recent descent of theirs upon our shores. You must bend every faculty to the discovering of that keynote, its name and significance. On it may hinge the whole future of our Island Empire. All this is, I fear, a severe task to lay upon one so young and inexperienced as yourself; yet I have a full belief that you will succeed in your errand, and that the making of the success will be your own making.

"And now, my son, I see that the boat has returned to bear you to your ship and away from Nippon and your father. Swear, before you depart, that by the gods of our house and the *ihai* of your dead mother you will leave no stone unturned to accomplish the purpose of your travels, and that before all else shall ever come with you, Nippon the Mikado and the Yo-Akè."

The lad bent his head to the ground before his father.

"I swear it, father," said he. "If I fail may my country, the Mikado and my kin forget my name."

"So be it," acknowledged his father in a voice which, by an iron

effort, he effaced of sentiment. "Farewell, my son. The gods have you in their keeping—farewell."

A long time the man stood peering from beneath bent brows at the great ship as her sails, spreading to the yards, bellied to the stiff harbor breeze. Then with a creaking of cordage and shouting of orders she began slowly to veer toward the harbor mouth. A small dot stood on the poop intently watching the shores as the ship receded. Lord Yo-Akè stretched forth his hands to it.

"O, Tokiyori," he whispered, the dry, pent-up sobs almost choking him, "my boy, Tokiyori! How like the withered bough on autumn-stricken tree am I, when the leaves, in all their beauty, are taken from it. The winter blasts may bend me now at their will, for that which I put forth upon me is gone, and in the chill and darkness am I alone—a naked branch. So must I wait until a new spring shall see thee re-budding on me—my boy! my boy!"

The ship was no more than a tiny speck against the horizon when Lord Yo-Akè turned and entered his norimono.

PART I

In the beginning was the sword

LEGEND OF ONE, NAKAHARA,
HANASHIKA TO
LORD YO-AKÈ

I

THE GARDEN BY THE WATER

Irám indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;
But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

A WARM, early summer day of the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six was drawing to its close as the old bell of Miidera intoned a deep-mouthed angelus. By the water's edge, a little knot of men arose, and turned their faces to where a stately castle towered placidly over the lake, yet with evident reluctance.

They were samurai, or military retainers, of Moto castle, the stately pile that housed Lord Asano Yo-Akè when on his Lake Biwa estate, three hundred miles from his castle of Shima, in the city of Yedo. Mata, who commanded the garrison at Moto, preserved an iron discipline; and scant excuse was allowed loiterers of his command who came not under the great gateway before the sun had gone down. Yet, even in the knowledge of this, the samurai walked to their rendezvous with many a backward glance at the bloodshot crest of Ishiyama, and the crimson stain on the arches of Seta Bridge; so that the last laggard had scarce reached the massive castle entrance before the reverberating of the great bell sank into the heart of the quivering shadows. Then, saving for the chirp of a cheery little cricket, and a crow's drowsy good-night caw from some nearby copse, the quietest hour of the day descended upon Biwa-ko, the Guitar Lake. Even in the landscape of Nippon was blent the sword and the song.

The samurai having entered the castle enclosure, filed off to their nagaya, the great gates of Moto shutting to for the night with a muffled clang. A young lady descended a small pathway that led from the yashiki to a little brook, pausing to re-arrange a flower that had fallen from her hair, and give a little feminine touch to the folds of her obi—a beautiful sash encircling her kimono. Altogether she was as typically Japanese as the surroundings themselves—Japanese of the old, dreamy, artistic Japan; and could not have been more than seventeen years of age. Slight of form she was—gracefully slender rather, for she was but unfolding into the flower of womanhood, while her features might be described as demure and pretty, rather than beautiful. There was an unmistakable aureola of breeding about her that hall-marked her the born aristocrat, requiring no informant to point out that she was an inmate of the daimio's residence, which perched just above her on a mound of mossy rocks overlooking the castle walls, and commanded a view of the lake itself. At the low, curving bridge which spanned the brook she paused, gazing into the foliage of a woodland glade that lay between the yashiki and the taiko-yagura, or drum-turret, as though expecting someone to emerge therefrom, perhaps some knight-errant in gallant armor, to help her while away the evening hour.

Indeed, if ever a copse could have yielded a fairy prince, that of Moto might, as it overhung the brook which flowed down in tiny cascades like little strips of fragile lace—sheer lace, into the delicate tracery of which seemed to have been inlaid, jade, and onyx, and jasper, so exquisite was the verdure which it mirrored. Presently, a number of little lights commenced to twinkle among the lower boughs, and the clickety-clack of clogs announced to her that someone was approaching from the grove. She stepped on to the bridge, pausing about midway, and, simultaneously, a little, wizened old fellow appeared from beneath the sylvan growth, and came to her side, bowing low.

"I perceive, by the breath of the evening, your presence Lady Kiku-ko," he observed, his face wrinkling into a thousand genial smiles.

"And I perceive your presence by the opening eyes, Nakahara," answered the young lady addressed as Kiku-ko. She pointed to the newly lighted lanterns as she spoke. It was their customary evening greeting to one another.

Nakahara, the castle hanashika, or actor story-teller, was somewhat of a privileged character. He had been in the service of the Yo-Akè household for well nigh three-quarters of a century—when the father of the present lord, Asano Yo-Akè, was still a young man, and had witnessed many changes in the great family he so faithfully served. But although now feeble with increasing age, he still tended his lanterns, and told his stories with all the zest of his former youth. Drawing forth his pipe and tobacco pouch, he prepared to pass a few of his evening moments in the company of his lord's ward, the betrothed of his absent young master, Lord Tokiyori. The moon had risen, and was just peering over the castle wall to play on bridge and brook. Old Nakahara squatted on his heels to light his pipe, and the moon fell upon his upturned countenance, transfiguring it with a sort of ethereal light. Kiku-ko, truly Japanese in her love of mystic beauty, stretched forth her hands to the moon.

"O thou of the night," said she, after the fashion of the maidens of her country, "whom the wise men say can look across the whole world, tell me of my native Isle of Tsushima, and the angry seas

beyond where dwell the 'Barbarians.' When you leave us do you turn ronin—wave-man—masterless wanderer without country or kin, to watch over the steps of my betrothed? Give me a sign from the heavens, Moon, I pray."

Nakahara inwardly approved the sentiments thus expressed by his future mistress. As the affianced of his young lord it seemed to him eminently commendable that she should be as anxious as was himself, or Lord Asano Yo-Akè, concerning the prolonged absence of the future master of the castle. Of late, Nakahara had begun to fear that Kiku-ko's cousin, the already famous young samurai, Lord Saito of Satsuma, was causing her to forget the absent heir. He could not understand, either, why Tokiyori's own father, his feudal lord, should countenance these rather too frequent visits of Lord Saito to Moto—frequent, that is, since the budding into womanhood of Kiku-ko. He was a very gentle old fellow, was Nakahara, yet, at times, intense in his likes and dislikes. Among the latter, for some reason not fully comprehensible even to himself, was Lord Saito of Satsuma.

"Very well asked, mistress," observed Nakahara anent Kiku-ko's question of the moon. "And in the face of the Lady of the Night herself do I read the answer."

Kiku-ko clapped her shapely hands delightedly. It was ever considered a great privilege that the old hanashika should weave romances for anyone in especial. Once before had he told a golden tale for her own delectation, concerning some famous deed of swordsmanship in which Lord Saito had been prominent, and which was for the moment the prideful talk of all samurai. Nakahara had picked up the bare threads among the soldiery at the nagaya, and delicately interwoven them into a charming and thrilling story. This, needless to say, was in the days before Lord Saito had given offense to the old man by frequenting the presence of Kiku-ko, and his prowess had been blazoned by Nakahara solely with an artist's eye to effect. Nakahara now repented that tale—he had come to fear its possible result—and this time was determined to paint so glowing a picture of his absent master that all memory of that former error should be erased or, at least, eclipsed. He pointed with the stem of his pipe at the moon, which was now nearly over the castle walls.

"In the face of the Queen of the Night," said Nakahara, "is a great ocean girt by fierce, bleak mountains—you can see them plainly if you will but observe, my Lady." He traced an imaginary circle about a heavy shadowing on the moon. "One mountain, above all the others," he continued, "stands forth prominently. It is the mountain of Knowledge, very lofty and almost impregnable. Yet I see a form clambering upwards along its precipitous cliffs, while other forms atop of the mountain crest are rolling obstructions across his path, lest he attain to the summit and crowd them off. Below him are many watchers, hopeful that he may succeed in his effort, so that he may call down to them of what is hidden on the high peak. Now he is just below the last ascent, but the crags there have become so sheer that he can not encompass them. He must retrace his steps, and again start climbing from another point. As he turns his face to descend, I note his features. They are those of my young lord, Tokiyori."

Nakahara paused to note the effect of his symbolism, while Kiku-ko still gazed at the moon as though following the downward course of the climber. He felt, somehow, that his tale had lacked a convincing fire, and had failed to convey its true key. He began to wish that he had depicted some other scene, wherein, for choice, a fight against terrible odds had occurred between the climber and some supposititious mountain banditti, Kiku-ko's next remark still further convinced him that she had failed to comprehend the hidden depths of his allegory.

"It seems a tedious climb for one to undertake merely to attain to a mountain top," she observed. "Would it not have been wiser for him to have waited until those on the plateau must descend, and then have forced them at the sword point to divulge the secret of the crest?"

Nakahara felt at a loss. He was forced to admit to himself that Kiku-ko's manner of viewing the matter was quite natural to one of her romantic and chivalric upbringing. It was too late, however, to retell the story in another way.

"The sword may not always prove the best means of knowledge," he objected, quietly.

"'The sword is the soul of the samurai'," quoted Kiku-ko from a time-honored proverb of the land.

"Of the samurai, but not of the people," corrected Nakahara.

"It was the soul of my fathers," asserted Kiku-ko, with a pretty display of martial spirit, "and what was my father's is mine. And it is the soul of our young noblemen of today, like my cousin Lord Saito, who has raised himself by it to be a commander of men."

"It would not so greatly matter about its being their soul if it were not their brains as well," commented old Nakahara, dryly, as he arose to his feet and lighted a stone toro—a fantastically shapen lantern—at one end of the bridge. This lighting of his lanterns was a solemn ceremony to Nakahara. He would touch the spark to the wick, murmuring "irasshai," just as an attendant ushers one into a theatre. Then, as it ignited, he would bow to it, saying "komban wa." His toro now alight, Nakahara bowed to his lady.

"I have my other lanterns to attend still," said he, realizing the futility of further appeal to Kiku-ko's comprehension. "And as my lanterns and I depend on each other for eyes, we can neither of us afford to neglect the other. With your gracious permission, mistress, I will retire."

Kiku-ko stood watching the little old actor story-teller as he clogged off up the shrubbery pathway that led to the *yashiki,* and then continued on her way across the bridge. Nearby was a bower, rich with hanging clusters of wistaria bloom. As she descended from the bridge toward this, she became aware of a form emerging from the glade, which strode swiftly to her with a firm, masterly step. As the moonlight fell across his features it revealed a strong, handsome face, well bred and finely chiseled. By his side he wore two swords. He bowed gracefully to Kiku-ko as he came up with her.

"The night is so beautiful that I felt that you must be near," said he.

Kiku-ko started slightly.

"Oh! it is you, cousin Saito," she exclaimed. "You frighted me. I half thought you a ronin of the moon."

Lord Saito bowed gravely to the moon.

"I am complimented," he answered. "Yet mayhap you are not so far wrong, for where better could a moon ronin fare than in the silver of your presence?"

Kiku-ko half hid her face, laughingly, behind the fan she carried.

"I chanced to be in Kyoto," he continued, "and seized this opportunity of paying my respects to Lord Yo-Akè and his pretty ward, my cousin."

"We are honored," she replied. "It would seem the moon is full of ronins tonight. Nakahara was but now telling me of one in 'Foreign' lands, and of his leading all others in the quest for knowledge. Nakahara called this ronin, Tokiyori Yo-Akè."

II

WHERE NAME OF SLAVE AND SULTAN IS FORGOT

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

LORD SAITO frowned at her reference to Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of whom he felt he had cause to be jealous. Also he was not a little secretly contemptuous of him for his wanderings in foreign lands.

"I grant you, my cousin," he replied—her father, Lord Suki Shimadzu of Tsushima was his uncle—"that Tokiyori Yo-Akè is the

first of us to mix with the 'Foreigner' on his own grounds, may he be the last, also. Yet I think other reasons might be ascribed to his continued absence from Nippon, just now."

"What reasons?" asked Kiku-ko, innocently.

"Connected with coming events," answered Saito, lowering his voice as they strolled up the glade together. "Surely you are not unaware that war is imminent between the Shogun and his daimios on the one side, and the Mikado and his *Kugè* on the other? It is but a matter of short time before the two factions—the Shogun at Yedo, and the Mikado at Kyoto—must meet with drawn swords."

"Even then I can not see how the knowledge of this would affect the fact of Tokiyori's absence?" commented Kiku-ko.

"No, but his absence very materially affects the fact that because of it he will not be required to bear arms upon one side or the other," rejoined Saito.

"Always supposing that he does not return before then," supplemented Kiku-ko.

Saito smiled. Undoubtedly Tokiyori's absence from Nippon at such a time gave good ground for just such an inference.

"Tokiyori will need to use haste *if* he intends returning before the commencement of hostilities," he observed, dryly.

Kiku-ko felt herself flushing. She would gladly have championed her affianced for her pride's sake, had he not by his absence taken from her her sole weapon of defense.

"Will it be so soon?" she said.

"It may break forth at any hour," he replied.

"And you, of course, will assist the Shogun," she affirmed, taking it unconsciously for granted that Saito, like most of the other powerful nobles of the day, would elect to throw in his lot with the Tokugawa party.

"No," answered Saito in a low decisive tone, and not very wisely. He was not at all wanting as a usual thing in worldly acumen, but, like lovers the world over, permitted his heart sometimes to run away with his head. Nor was he aware that Lord Yo-Akè counted on this human frailty when he suffered the very obvious attentions of Saito to his son's affiancèd, for the sake of much valuable in-

formation which he very adroitly extracted from the unsuspecting girl after each of these visits. "You can scarcely suppose," continued Saito, "that I would fail the Mikado at such a time, and when he is in such sore need of men!"

"But why the Mikado?" asked Kiku-ko, innocently. "Certainly he is our lawful Emperor—the Son of the Sun God. Yet it is not himself, they say, but the nobles of his court—his kugè—who wish to crush the power of the Shogun."

"That is true, too, to a certain extent," admitted Saito. "Yet the struggle is bound to come in any case. But I shall fight for the Mikado, first because I believe he hates the 'Foreigners,' and because the Shogun is permitting them to desecrate our city of Yedo. If it were not for the Shogun, the Mikado would soon have the 'Barbarian' driven beyond the sea-line. And, secondly, I desire to fight for the Mikado because, had it not been for the Shogun, your father—my uncle Shimadzu—might be alive today. Our Satsuma family will never forgive the Shogun that."

"But that was ordered by the Mikado himself," objected Kiku-ko, whose fair-mindedness, although she felt the tears filling her eyes, compelled her to speak in defense of the Shogun.

"Only as a matter of form," explained Saito in exoneration of the Mikado's part in that sorrowful drama. "The Mikado seals all documents and petitions from the Shogun, now, perforce. Of course it was a mistake on the part of my uncle Shimadzu in attempting to permit the 'Foreigner' access to Tsushima; but as the Shogun was even then himself arranging to open the whole of Nippon to 'Foreign' traffic, with what justice could he demand the death of your father for the lesser offense? Remember, you are of our Satsuma family, too, Kiku-ko sama, and should think as we."

"Yes, until I become a member of the Yo-Akè family," assented Kiku-ko, thinking of her coming marriage with Tokiyori Yo-Akè.

"Another reason why I shall side with the Mikado," he continued in low tones, "is because his party will be the weaker. And when we win—for win we *must*—there will be all the more glory to those who have fought against the greater odds and conquered."

"It is all very terrible," said Kiku-ko, plaintively.

"Terrible, indeed!" repeated Saito. He was a young man scarce seven and twenty, rapidly rising to martial fame, and in the presence of the woman he secretly adored, it was not to be wondered at that he sought to add a few touches of color to that picture in which he himself might play an important part. "As I said, the Mikado *must* win if he hopes to shake off the power of the Shogun, and, on the other hand, the Tokugawa can not afford to lose. I shall probably command our Satsuma samurai, nearly all of whom are veterans, and we shall doubtless be opposed to the Mitu men, with whom, as you may recall, we have an old outstanding blood-feud. It will be a hard-fought fight, Kiku-ko, and when the sun goes down on the last stricken field there will be but few banners left for it to shine upon.

Kiku-ko felt a little thrill pass over her at Saito's portrayal of the coming civil strife, for, if terrible, it would also be glorious; and she was a woman. She wondered if Tokiyori would have shared Saito's eagerness for the fray. Then she caught herself flushing as she thought of the slight, frail lad, so serious and studious beyond his years, whom she could just recall having seen when he was a boy of sixteen, and she a little maid of five. They had reached, unconscious of their whereabouts, so absorbed were they in conversation, the limits of the glade walk, and now turned back toward the bower.

"Three days from tomorrow is the fête of Karasaki," Saito remarked. "Shall you witness it, Kiku-ko sama?"

"Oh, yes," she answered. "We never miss the fête when at Moto. Tonosama always considers it one of his particular duties as a landowner here to be present for a few hours on the opening day. Besides, old Nakahara would feel bitterly hurt were we not present to step across his little piles of good-luck salt, and listen to at least one of his tales."

"Old Nakahara's tales are getting stale with constant use," laughed Saito. "I have heard him tell that one of the Kyoto and Osaka frogs five distinct times within the past three months to my knowledge."

"Poor old Nakahara!" smiled Kiku-ko with a pretty solicitousness. "He is becoming very old and infirm. Yet time was, so Tono-

sama says, when Nakahara was accounted one of the greatest hanashika of the southlands. I think Tonosama is very attached to him, and really believes him to be a seer. But are you also going to be present at Karasaki with us, cousin?"

"I am afraid not," he replied. "I must hasten back to Kyoto tomorrow, in answer to a summons from my kinsman. I suppose, though, you expect other guests during the fête season?"

"Only Prince Matsuo Goto, who sent his messenger to Tonosama this morning, advising him of his intention to attend the festival. He will arrive at Otsu tomorrow, and Tonosama has already ordered Mata to take a guard of samurai to escort the prince from there to Moto."

"Goto coming to Biwa," mused Saito. "I wonder what can have brought him so far afield?"

"Does not the prince travel much?" queried Kiku-ko.

"Only along routes where there are relays of inns," laughed Saito. "He would as soon think of walking barefoot to his northern country as of traversing byroads where yadoyas are few, and eels an unknown luxury. Something of import must have urged him to this visit to Moto. I dare swear he has a feast of eels ordered at Otsu already. Which is the chief yadoya there, Kiku-ko sama?"

"There is only one," she replied, laughing at Saito's description of the great Prince. "It is beyond the pines at the further end of the village, and is kept by old Yamaki."

"I was just thinking," observed Saito, "that it would be a very amusing joke to stop there on my way to Kyoto tomorrow, and devour Goto's eels."

With this remark of Saito's they gained the bower, and he drew aside a cluster of blooms that they might enter. During their walk the moon had risen high in its flight, and now looked down on them through the unleafed wistaria blossoms overhead. It wove a veil about Saito and Kiku-ko, and touched fondly her perfect head, entwining myriad little web-stitches among the coils of her black hair. Then it played over the folds of her kimono, delicately tracing the faint outline of her young form. She seated herself and Saito came to her side.

At their feet sang the brook as melodious as a *Koto,* its silver threads vibrating musically where they stretched across the little cascades. Below the miniature falls and fern-swept pools, the water's refrain echoes in a treble—such an echo as recarries the motif in a rhapsody. And all the while small pieces of pendent glass tinkled over head in a sheer alto. It was a symphony of the night, a nocturne of charmed waters, untramelled by the limited conceptions of mankind's compositions.

At the entrance to the bower was a toro, supported by a large upright stone, on the face of which was inscribed: "What is in the book is in the heart. Yet neither you nor I have conceived it."

It was eminently appropriate. Saito was a Buddhist, as was also Kiku-ko. Under his martial exterior Saito had the inborn poesy of the real artist—the birthright of every Nipponese. Something in the cadence of the brook, and the witchery of the moon, awoke a memory-chord in his soul. It was like a song of the birth—the birth of the Virgin Light, when Nippon was as yet unassoiled by contamination with the outer world—when the days were gold, and the nights were love, and the temples were sweet with the presence of the gods. As he stood gazing upon Kiku-ko with the fire of a poet and the ardor of a wooer, Biwa, and all that was earthly, faded from his knowledge. He knew not, nor cared, whether it were dusk or dawn in the bower; he only knew that she for whom his very soul panted was there beside him, and that it was the Morning of his World to him. He touched the little, exquisite hand that fluttered in her lap.

"Kiku-ko sama," said he in a quiet, dreamy voice, "a picture comes before my eyes, and by it I know that *once* we were one. It may have been a thousand cycles ago—or an aeon, for who may count the chasms of their re-births? I reckon but the re-incarnation of my soul when I know you *now* again in this mortal span. Listen, heart of mine. This is how the picture is painted for me.

"I see but darkness—awful, overwhelming darkness. Then suddenly a great, pure, enthralling light floods this black nothingness. And from this light and darkness is born a shadow. It seems to me the most wondrous creation, for it fills me with a knowledge of unknown perfectness and peace, so marvelously beautiful is

the form it assumes. The shadow seems to be a woman-child; and, because it is so perfect in its beauty, I think that it is Art—and that its name is Love.

"So it appears to me that love is born to create from, and make for light and darkness, a world. Yet, unaided, how may that be possible? And now I see heavy, lowering clouds approaching. They draw nearer and nearer each other, until they meet with a deafening crash, whilst flashes of bright fire run between them. And, lo! as the clouds as suddenly dissolve, I see a figure. It grasps a sword. It is a warrior—the son of Thunder and Lightning. From beneath his feet a flare of vari-colored lights springs forth, arching across the infinite."

Saito paused a moment in his description; and a sleepy sparrow, imagining that it was the morning, twitted from a nearby tree.

"The rainbow cleaves through space," continued Saito, "far above the head of the soldier. A moment he scans the towering crest; then, brandishing his sword, charges to the summit—but, there, only soft strains of music meet his ear; as, gazing down, he decries Shadow—the Art-Maid—playing upon a koto, and singing sweetly. And as he stands upon the crest of the great rainbow, enraptured by this sight, a glorious sun faintly crimsons all.

"It is the dawning of love, Kiku-ko sama—love, treading the pathway of love to Love herself, who awaits him at the end of the arched rainbow—yet the soldier fears to descend—"

Again he stopped, abruptly, lost in the thoughts the vision invoked; and Kiku-ko, already awakened to his from her, now forgotten, world, added in a low, ecstasied whisper:

"Art and the sword are one, in Nippon."

Saito half heard the whisper, and it brought his vision before him again.

"The night is come," he continued in the same dreamy tone of voice, "and a moon is created to light their nuptials. . . . . I now see other forms arising from the union of art and the sword; some good and beautiful, some foul and loathsome. They are thoughts; and I see these thoughts evolving and evolving until they, too, take shape—shapes of fair towns and cities, and rich

lands; shapes of dark sinks of vice, and evil byways. I see them growing, and growing—ever growing, until in an access of might they seek to make light and darkness, and thunder and lightning, their playthings—gods!"

He placed his hand suddenly across his eyes with a gesture of sharp pain. All frightened, Kiku-ko arose and came to his side.

"What is it, Saito sama?" she asked, trembling, "Oh! what do you see?"

"Nothing," he answered a trifle unsteadily, removing his hand. "I can see no more. There was a flash that blinded me for the moment—and then the vision was gone. There is left but you and me, Kiku-ko sama—and the bower."

"*Our* bower," she whispered.

He stretched forth his arms to her, and she surrendered herself to the intoxication of her awakening. She, too, now cared naught for other than the words and caresses of the soldier. It was for them the one perfect breath, allowed by the gods in all our lives once, when the vale of Elysia lies revealed. The wistaria had closed them about from the world.

Clickety-clack! clickety-clack! Old Nakahara was clogging about again to wish his lanterns a good-night as he extinguished them. At the opening of the bower he paused, parting the hanging blooms with his hands.

He noted a look upon Kiku-ko's face which comes but once to every woman, and drew his own conclusions. He was a student of human nature, was the old hanashika—his profession made him such.

Saito and Kiku-ko with a quiet "O yasumi nasai" passed by him through the bower opening, and walked toward the shrubbery path. He stood watching them while they crossed the bridge, and ascended toward the yashiki. Soon a door slid, and in the sudden flood of light he saw the two enter the house. After all, Nakahara was a lover of human nature, too, or he could never have been the story-teller he was. He turned to the bower lantern, sadly.

"Sayonara," sighed the old hanashika, as he blew out the light.

III

THE LORD FORLORN

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord Forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

WHILE this scene between Saito and Kiku-ko in the wistaria bower was enacting, one other event was closing about Moto, which would have its distinct bearing upon them both, on Lord Asano Yo-Akè, and upon the future of Nippon. At that same hour a "Foreign" vessel had come to anchor in the harbor of Hiogo, to

discharge freight, and its single passenger—a slight young man, clad in European attire, although evidently a Japanese, and who could not as yet have attained thirty years of age. A sanpan bore him and his luggage from the side of the vessel to one of the town slips, whence he came ashore, and sought a night's lodging at a nearby yadoya. There he ordered a conveyance to Otsu for the morrow, cautioning the landlord that he wished to make an early start, as the journey would occupy some two days' time.

Otsu is a small fisher village on the extreme southern shores of Lake Biwa. Not being on the main route of traffic—for Kyoto, where the Tokaido runs, lies several miles to the south and west from it—Otsu was but seldom accorded the sight of great folk, save when, semi-yearly, Lord Yo-Akè and his retinue journeyed to, or returned from, Yedo, or when the castle of Moto had guests. On those occasions Otsu was fortunate, for, unless one followed the lengthy road around the lake it was necessary to traverse its one small street to come to the landing stage from which sanpans might be chartered to the castle side of the shore.

Near the lake end of the village two mighty pines form a rude sort of portal to Otsu. In some past century the soil has been torn from their hold—perhaps by flood, although there is no record thereof—so that these trees clutch the low, rocky embankment with one rooty embrace, the other roots being pushed forth into space in the semblance of a gnarled network of enormous fingers. Through these giant hands the lake road leads into the main street of the village direct. Little houses dot the street irregularly on either side; and at the far end of the village, near a small clump of pines, was the yadoya of Otsu, kept by old Yamaki. Not that Yamaki was really old, but somehow he was so associated in the simple minds of the villagers with his quaint, ancient inn, that it had become the custom to refer to him in that manner. Like his yadoya, Yamaki was one of the recognized landmarks of the hamlet. It was whispered that he had once been a strolling actor, but, whether that were so or not, Yamaki was now, like his inn, eminently respectable.

The day following Saito's wooing of Kiku-ko, and the coming of the "Foreign" vessel to Hiogo, Otsu had the privilege of first

entertaining Lord Saito and his retinue, and later one of somewhat higher rank, although of less military fame. It befell that Mata, who had been dispatched from the castle by Lord Yo-Akè to meet Prince Goto, was marching at the head of his samurai between the great rooty pine hands of the village. Already the sun had gone down, and the early moon was mirroring its face in the glassy surface of Biwa-ko. Across the lake the great fortalice of Moto looked placidly upon the fisher sanpans that were drawing homewards from Yabasè. Here and there the little paper-paned shoji of the houses gave forth their glow from andon and hibatchi within; yet the street, and even the village itself, had an air of being depopulated. It was evident that something of unusual importance was happening at the further end of the hamlet, where was situate Yamaki's yadoya, for such a hubbub broke suddenly from that direction upon the ears of Mata and his men as caused them instinctively to close their ranks. Every one was fully aware that the actual outbreak of hostilities between Shogun and Mikado might come at any hour almost, and Kyoto—the Mikado's city, and base of his operations—lay but few *ri* from Otsu as has been mentioned. Affairs might have come to a head even sooner than had been generally anticipated. Mata was just coming to this conclusion when a deep voice broke suddenly into a roar that set his mind at rest. No one in Nippon other than the fat Prince Matsuo Goto of the north possessed such a mighty volume of tone. Mata was familiar with the prince's personality from his frequent visits to Shima castle, in Yedo. He quickened the step of his men, and hastened on to where the great nobleman was roaring forth proverb after proverb as was his custom when conversing.

"'A tumor makes no choice of a place!'" bellowed the resonant voice as Mata and his escort approached. "How now, thou villain inn-keeper? How of the fried eels and sancho leaf garnish I ordered by courier to be ready against my passing today? Dost think a personage of my weight may travel from Kyoto to Karasaki without bite or sup?"

"Humbly craving your noble lordship's pardon," came the answer, muffled perforce from the posture of humility assumed by Yamaki, "the honorable Lord Saito of Satsuma passed through

here but three short hours since. His lordship forced myself and servant to serve to his retinue the eels in cooking for your highness."

"Words! all words!" objected the huge voice. "'If you must be a dog, belong to a great house.' Whom, pray, is Lord Saito in rank that he should be served the delicacies from the platter of Prince Matsuo Goto? Again, I say, what of the fried eels and sancho leaf garnish?"

"If your highness would but have an honorable patience," began Yamaki—

"Patience!" vociferated the enraged prince. "Patience! 'Yesterday's bride is tomorrow's mother-in-law.' Where is my sword-bearer?"

At this juncture Mata and his samurai arrived upon the scene. On word of the invitation from Lord Yo-Akè, all wrath faded from the angry nobleman's face, his little roving eyes twinkling with delight. He was especially desirous of seeing in person Asano Yo-Akè, just then, and had half feared that the latter might chance to be absent.

"'A single aim pierces to heaven'," he observed to Mata, in answer to the invitation borne by him. "I humbly accept your daimio's kind hospitality, and will quarter myself and retinue upon him for a night and day. Yet I like not leaving my eels behind. 'The fish that escapes from the net seems always the largest'."

He added the latter part of this speech to himself.

"Your highness' pardon," said Mata, deferentially, "but we heard an hubbub as we entered Otsu. I trust no discourtesy hath been shown by anyone here?"

"'When you need bread, go to the bakery'," explained Goto. "This fellow," indicating the still kneeling Yamaki, "hath been provendering others at my expense. Honorable inside was empty. Ho! sword-bearer! Hew me the head from off this villain inn-keeper."

One of Goto's samurai stepped forth from the long line that filled the village street, drawing his blade with a sharp whir.

"Nay, nay, your highness! I beg of you!" intreated poor Yamaki. "The fault should rest with Lord Saito of Satsuma who hath depleted my inn. Alas, that I should lose customer, good name, and life itself for a fault not of my making!"

The reasonableness of this appealed to Goto, whose bark was really far worse than his bite, and whose heart was ever sympathetic for anyone in adversity.

"Well, well," he admitted in mollified tones, "perhaps you are right. 'A one gallon vessel can hold no more than one gallon.' Get up, fellow. Hi, there! thou ruffian stavemen! pick up my norimono. Now then, sir knight of the Yo-Akè—if you are ready? Forward, to Moto!"

A sharp word of command rang out from the samurai leaders, and the serried ranks of soldiery surged forward as, with a beating of staves, and glittering of halberds and sword hilts, the banner of Goto, with its crest of three sancho leaves within a gold embroidered circle, swung toward the lake shore for Moto.

Within the great room of his castle yashiki, sat Lord Yo-Akè, lost in moody thought. Considering the beauty of his surroundings, the cause of his gloom was not apparent. Moto was one of the most perfect edifices erected by the hand of man, and neither expense nor labor had been spared to add to its artistic luxuriance. Indeed, it was said that only one other garden in the whole of Nippon could equal that of Moto's—that of Nijiima, Lord Sakurai's Yedo residence. Shima, Lord Yo-Akè's other castle at Shiba, in Yedo, imposing as it undoubtedly was, could not for one moment compare in actual loveliness to Moto. Added to the possession of these two magnificent seats, Lord Yo-Akè was wealthy, and a councilor of the very highest rank on the Bakafu—the "curtain council"—of the Shogun.

The room in which he now sat was the essence of good taste; richly, but sparingly furnished. In a toko-no-ma, or wall-recess, hung a Sesshu—a kakemono of exceeding rarity. Near the toko-no-ma, a sword rack of exquisite design in lacquer supported several perfect examples of the swordsmith's craft, among them a great blade executed by no less a master than Muramasa. This was known to legend as "The Devil Sword," and had belonged to Oni Yo-Akè—sometimes referred to as the "Devil of Biwa-ko"—who also enjoyed the distinction of being the founder of the Yo-Akè family and fortunes. It was supposed that when this sword was once drawn it must either drink the blood of a foeman of the

family, or it would turn itself against the vitals of its wearer. In an opposite corner from the sword-rack was the shrine containing the *ihai* to the daimio's dead wife, with its accompanying ever-burning lamp. Upon the dais on which Lord Yo-Akè sat was a small, richly lacquered table, on which were several scrolls of writing matter. Thick *tatami* matted the floor, while hand painted fusima or sliding doors closed in the apartment. These fusima were worthy of more than passing attention, for they depicted the eight points of greatest beauty about Biwa-ko—Seta, the moon on Hiriyama, sunrise at Ishiyama, the geese flighting to Katata, the fisher sanpans drawing in from Yabase, the great bell of Miidera, and some jade and silver waterfalls, with Moto itself in the background. Like the *kakemono,* they, too, had been executed by a famous artist. A beautiful shrubbery vista, seen when the paper-paned shoji were open, completed the settings. Yet, even amid all this loveliness, Lord Yo-Akè sat wrapped in intense gloom.

It was summer of the year 1866, and just twelve years ago his son, Tokiyori, had set forth on his travels among the "Foreigners." Was he ever again to behold the features of that son? He had heard from him at more or less regular intervals, but, so far from expressing a desire for immediate return to Nippon, the tenor of those letters had latterly indicated that their author contemplated a somewhat indefinite sojourn abroad, more especially in British possessions, with whose people he appeared distinctly infatuated. The receipt of one of these epistles, some nine months before, had so annoyed the daimio that he had dispatched a reply commanding his heir to return to Nippon at once. Still time passed, and there were no signs of the expatriate, nor did the daimio know now his exact whereabouts. Perforce he could but continue patiently awaiting, and trusting that enough of filial respect was still left to cause him to obey his father's injunctions. This, in itself, was sufficiently perturbing, and, when added to the political issues pending, explains why the daimio was so downcast amid the surrounding charms of his Lake Biwa residence. To comprehend the latter cause more fully, a short family history and reference to the inner national politics of the times becomes necessary.

Since its inception by Oni Yo-Akè—the "Devil of Biwa-ko"—

the Yo-Akè family had come through the three hundred odd years of its existence with rather more good fortune than had been the lot of many of its compeers. Two salient family characteristics were mostly responsible for this—their native wit, and an adaptability for what is termed "the masterly inactivity" of statecraft, both prominent features of Lord Asano Yo-Akè's own make-up—while a well-considered system of intermarriage with the families greatest in power had contributed to the Yo-Akè's repeated advancement and security. From these family tenets sprang Lord Asano Yo-Akè, and although in his youth a staunch follower of things martial, when the unexpected death of his elder brother in an inland foray, followed by the demise of his father, had seated him as the titular head of his family, he had lain aside the sword for all time, devoting himself exclusively to his country's politics. But while his political life had been successful to a marked degree, advancing him at a comparatively early age to the post of chief councilor to successive Shoguns, he had also increased the enmity of many, who asserted that he served his masters best by serving himself first.

The whole may therefore be briefly summed up by saying that up to the advent of the "Foreigner," in 1854, Asano Yo-Akè was a politician of weight, but actuated mostly by motives concerning himself and his family. Since that time he had broadened into a politician with greater and deeper motives inspiring his methods.

In a sense the cause, or causes, of his gloom concerned the future policies of his family. He had been too close in the councils of the Shoguns not to realize that the rule of the Tokugawas was nearing its end. They had become too ambitious—greedy perhaps better describes the condition. From a sort of public representative of the Mikado—in virtual retirement at Kyoto—the ambitions of this great military family had led them into an assumption of not only the outward prerogatives of the throne, but the actual sovereignty, itself. Emperors, under the cruel greed of the Tokugawas, were deprived of their freedom, persecuted, or banished into the refuge of monasteries at the will of the Shoguns. The kuge, or court noblêsse of Kyoto, were virtually in exile, nor were the heredities of the daimios, the territorial supporters of

the Shogunate, safe to their holders. For some time there had been an undercurrent of murmuring against this, and now it was plainly visible to all that the old order must give place to a new. The Tokugawas saw this also, as clearly as the meanest of their subjects, and, in their frenzy to hold their own, attempted to redouble their grip.

Lord Yo-Akè, admitting to himself the probable outcome of civil strife, sought to consummate some plan for the future of his family. He was a man of a scant fifty years of age, with a strong grip on the pulse of his country, and a far deeper insight into the future than his compeers. If the Shogunate fell, what would become of the Yo-Akè? He had asked himself this question on that very night twelve years ago which had seen his friend and guest, Lord Shimadzu, done to death at Shima castle by order of the Shogun, and had answered it by sending his son abroad. His policy in this respect had been direct and simple—for Lord Yo-Akè. Firmly believing, even then, that the Mikado's faction must triumph ultimately, he sought the means to attach himself—or, rather, to render himself indispensable—to it. But he realized that it was not sufficient that he should go to the Mikado saying simply, "I wish to be your majesty's councilor." He must have stronger qualifications than an empty-handed desire, even when backed by the Yo-Akè prestige, to place before the Emperor. Opportunely had occurred the diversion wrought by the demands of the United States government, and the visit of Commodore Perry's flotilla, bearing them. From this Lord Yo-Akè foresaw this much: that the future of Nippon would hinge largely on its international policies and intercourse. Beyond that he had not attempted to peer, but the knowledge of it had caused him to urge, secretly, his friend, Lord Shimadzu, to open Tsushima to "Foreign" traffic, with what disastrous results is known. Thereafter Asano Yo-Akè reasoned that if, when the Shogunate should fall, he could approach the Mikado with a full and complete knowledge of "Foreign" policies, his chances of procuring an important appointment would be greatly enhanced, and that had actuated the almost unprecedented act of sending his son on a visit to "Foreign" nations. In all, Asano Yo-Akè's reasoning was absolutely

faultless, and in result erred only in the non-appearance of its most important factor, his son, Tokiyori.

Thus musing, Lord Yo-Akè raised his head and gazed abstractedly about the room in which he sat. So absorbed had he been in these thoughts that he had failed to note the gathering night until through the open shoji flickering moon-shadows ran weirdly about the apartment. These touched the hilt of the great "devil" sword of Oni Yo-Akè, and played over the ihai to his dead wife. Then the moon-shadows danced hither and thither, while a soft summer wind moaned gently against the eaves of the yashiki, until, finally, they began, to his mind, to assume definite shape. There went the form of Shimadzu, his friend, who might today have been alive had he not urged him to a hazardous act. And, there, the shade of his wife, the Lady Umè-ko, who had been required to die that—despite the warnings of physicians—a son and heir might be born to him. He might have prevented both fatalities—why had he not stayed his hand? It seemed to Lord Yo-Akè that the forms beckoned him to look, and he saw suddenly a picture of the union of two young people—his son and Shimadzu's daughter. Behind them they hid another form, scarcely visible. Was this the answer—that because of that hidden something the union he saw pictured was necessary—and the two deaths? A long time he watched this vision, until the shadows danced into another portraiture before his eyes, and he saw an atonement, and a sacrifice. The sacrifice seemed to personify the features of his son, and the atonement of a little child. But himself he could not see.

The chill of the late evening crept through the open shoji and closed about his soul. For the first time Asano Yo-Akè knew fear. Gods! If his son should fail to return, or if he himself should die before his time! He was treading on a sheer precipice now, and any day might come an accusation of him from his enemies to the Shogun. It seemed as though all had gone dark before him—nay, it was dark, for the lamp before the ihai no longer glowed!

He fell upon his knees before the shrine.

"O, Umè-ko!" he cried softly, "stretch forth thy hand from the Meido-Land to save me, and to guide our boy homeward!"

A moment longer the darkness continued. Then the lamp in the

little shrine suddenly glowed again, and the peace of the steady flame brought a great comfort to his heart.

A fusima slid, and the voice of a servant announced, "Prince Matsuo Goto."

IV

DEEP WATERS AND A WIND

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

WHEN one has a delicate errand to perform, or doubtful information to be gleaned, it is sometimes best to approach the matter boldly. So decided Prince Goto as he waddled into the presence of the master of Moto, making and receiving the usual obeisance. Already were servants arranging the small dining tables

before the cushions placed for the two noblemen, orders to serve a meal in Lord Yo-Akè's own apartment having been given in anticipation of the arrival of the great lord of the north. Goto fairly beamed at the sight. He was a votary of the table, a gourmet, and held implicit faith in the belief that a host with his own table before him could be made to speak with far greater freedom than could the same person in the less convivial environment of an official chamber. Goto also prided himself not a little in secret on the adroit manner in which he had prearranged this visit so as to make it appear but a casual journey from Yedo, with the fête at Karasaki as its objective. The consequent invitation to stay at Moto he regarded as but the natural outcome of his own shrewdness in thus seeking an opportunity of sounding his host concerning his dispositions in the forthcoming internecine strife. He might have spared himself such laborious thought and plotting, for Asano Yo-Akè had already easily guessed the underlying purport of this visit, and was secretly amused at the prince's rather obvious efforts to conceal it. Lord Yo-Akè possessed a perfectly developed faculty for the perusal of other men's minds, and it would have required a very much more clever deception than Goto was capable of to mislead him in a matter of such apparentness.

Not being aware of this, Goto proceeded to put his carefully thought out plan into execution. As a man of large landed and political interests, he was not unnaturally anxious to ascertain exactly how his compeers purposed taking sides in the event of a clash between the Shogun and Mikado. He could not, of course, he realized, approach Lord Yo-Akè in this instance with any degree of frankness, for their relative positions on the Shogunate council would have converted the question, no matter how carefully concealed, into the essence of bad faith on the part of the daimio toward the Tokugawas—an insult that, however much he might question Yo-Akè's sincerity, Goto was not prepared to offer. But he could lead his host into a statement that might indicate the trend of his intentions, and, by a system of cross questioning, perhaps gain some sort of admission from him. Thus had planned Prince Goto, with what success the sequel will show.

"'The fortune teller knows not his own destiny'," he quoted to

his host, as they prepared to enjoy the viands with which the little tables were set. "I had not supposed my hunger would have procured me a place at such a feast of the gods this night. Pray how do your servitors prepare the eels' flesh at Moto, Yo-Akè?" he added, anxiously regarding a dish of those beloved luxuries.

"Upon bamboo spits, well rubbed in sancho leaves before being thrust into the flesh of the eels, I believe," answered the daimio.

"Excellent! excellent!" agreed Goto in joyous anticipation. "It is the way I have always instructed my own ruffians in the north; only I require that the platters be well rubbed with the sancho berry also." He busied himself a moment with the girdle that held his kimono in place. "If you will permit," he added, "I will loose the folds of my kimono before sampling this divine feast, as is my custom. 'First prepare your arsenal, then go into battle'."

It was evident that Goto was no mere recruit at this sort of warfare from the massed attack he immediately executed. Either at the board or with the sword the great prince was reckoned as no mean adversary.

"Referring to the culture and preparation of eels," observed Lord Yo-Akè, after a few moments, perceiving that his guest's appetite was becoming somewhat appeased, "I recall having heard young Saito of Satsuma remark that they should be first pickled in sea-grass."

The subject of Saito was a sore one just then with Goto. The memory of the eels in waiting for him that very day, which had been so rudely consumed by the former, still rankled.

"'Little minds gaze at the skies through a needle-hole'," he responded with ponderous sarcasm. "Saito was reared on a shore overgrown with kelp."

"So, also, was my ward and future daughter-in-law, Kiku-ko Shimadzu," commented the daimio.

"'The fish dances under the wave, but the bird flies heavenward'," quoted Goto, with great readiness of mind. "I make my humble salutations to the Lady Kiku-ko. I remember her father, Suki Shimadzu, well."

He bent his forehead to a cup containing sakè, as he spoke, the contents of which he drained; then, rinsing it in a bowl of fresh

water by his elbow, passed it on to the daimio that he, too, might join in this toast to his future daughter-in-law.

"Speaking of Shimadzu," continued Goto, who thought that he perceived a chance of leading the conversation around to present political topics, "I recall very well when he attempted to open Tsushima to 'Foreign' traffic. The Shogun very properly nipped that in the bud, for the time was not then ripe. 'Secret wrong invites disaster.' Doubtless Shimadzu had his notions of what was due his country and posterity—yet, 'the tiger and the deer do not lie down together.' Poor Suki paid the penalty for his temerity. A most senseless proceeding, I thought it."

Had Goto known that that very political movement of the defunct Shimadzu's was at the instigation of the man at whose table he was at that moment dining he might have been more reserved in his criticism. Being blissfully ignorant of this fact, he waited an answer to this observation in the hope that it might possibly lead Yo-Akè into some statement of his views regarding the present policy of the Shogun.

"After all," observed the daimio, finally, "it was bound to come about eventually. We were too confined, Goto; communal life does not thrive on isolation. But Shimadzu, as you say, preceded his day. . . . I, also, was his friend."

Goto pondered on this a moment, but failed to find any definite information contained in the remark.

"Shimadzu was unfortunate in his haste," said he at last. "Yet today we count his disciples by thousands. 'When an insane man runs the sound-minded will follow'."

And to himself he added: "'Look at a man's friends, then judge his character.' Shimadzu and Yo-Akè were close in each other's councils."

"Referring to the 'Foreigners'," observed the daimio, after a pause, during which Goto consumed another dish of eels, and laid secret plans for another method of attack, "I learn recently that they are in favor of the Mikado's assuming the actual reins of government. More especially the representatives of the august realm of America, who desire to treat directly with the Emperor in person. It now appears that, by their manner of designating the

Shogun as 'Tycoon' in their documents, they were of the belief that he was in reality the Sacred Person. Is it to be presumed from this that the presence of the 'Foreigner' in Yedo will receive greater encouragement from Kyoto than that already accorded by our party?"

Lord Yo-Akè put this question with the air of one desirous of information; although, in reality, it was but intended to ascertain whether or no Goto had been secretly trafficking with the Mikado's faction. If the latter should chance to be the case, Goto would to some extent be cognizant of the Kyoto party's policy, and not likely very adroit to conceal his information. Lord Yo-Akè knew quite well what that policy was, and that the young Emperor's advisers were then bitterly opposed to any and all intercourse with other nations. Goto's reply convinced him of the former's ignorance of the Kyoto views on the matter, and of his innocence from any intriguing.

"'You can not expect a clear vision from a cave dweller'," replied the prince sagely. "The Kyoto party have been so long in enforced seclusion they are more than likely to favor any interests that offer the slightest support. Undoubtedly the advisers of the Mikado will favor the presence of the 'Foreigner' more than we, in return for his aid."

Lord Yo-Akè appeared to weigh this opinion gravely.

"I am not sure," he remarked, finally, "that we of Nippon did an altogether wise thing by admitting the 'Foreigner' into our midst. Still, so long as he has become an established factor in our national life, it humbly seems to me, now, the height of folly and rashness to wantonly antagonize his interests here. I do conceive that such utter rancour against him as, for instance, that held by Saito, which finds its vent in recent movements against the 'Foreigner's' life and liberty, is a most hazardous feeling for Nippon to entertain. Moreover, it is a direct violation to the 'Foreign' treaties, for which we may some day have to pay a heavy indemnity."

Goto sniffed at this second mention of Saito's name.

"Speaking of Saito," said he, "I owe him but little good-will. He passed through Otsu on his way to Kyoto today, as I have very

good cause to remember. 'Even a stone image will resent a rough stroked face!'"

"On his way to Kyoto?" said the marquis indolently.

"'The snake's road the snake alone knows'," affirmed Goto, severely. "It was said that he journeyed to Kyoto."

"It is not often that in one day our poor countryside is distinguished by two such personages as that of the lord of the north and the famous swordsman of Satsuma," remarked Lord Yo-Akè courteously. "Did you chance to meet him?"

"No," replied Goto, "but my eels did. 'Kindred spirits seek one another'."

"It is rumored that the Shogun intends him for commander of the Baka-fu forces, if such take the field against the Kyoto troops," observed the daimio, indifferently.

Goto laid down his chopsticks; he had wanted this very post himself. Lord Yo-Akè was aware of this fact, also, and sought this method of creating a breach between Goto and Saito. Asano Yo-Akè did not wish it thought that he was himself in any way inimical to the latter, because of the very necessary information—through the medium of Tetsu-ko—Saito's visits brought to Moto. Nevertheless, he perceived that Saito's vaunted antipathy against the 'Foreigner' might eventually embroil Nippon with outside nations, so sought quietly in every way possible to raise a little undercurrent of feeling against him.

Goto pondered a moment on this appointment of Saito's.

"'The swimming fish disturbs the pool'," he reminded finally. "Do you think this contemplated elevation of Saito to command our forces wise, Yo-Akè? His hatred of the 'Foreigner' is very well known."

"All moves are more or less open to criticism, Goto," replied the daimio, equivocally. "Facts have, as you say, an illbred habit of intruding."

Goto was distinctly puzzled. He could not remember having said anything of the sort. It suddenly occurred to him that he was getting no nearer the object of his visit to Moto. He picked up his chopsticks, and twirled them a moment in perplexity.

"'You cannot catch the tiger without going to his lair'," he

thought. And then, aloud, "'Doubting minds bring a swarm of demons,' Yo-Akè. Personally, I question the wisdom of such an appointment. Still, whatever we as individuals may think, we must stand or fall by our master, the Shogun. Is it not so?"

Lord Yo-Akè stifled a smile at the crudity of Goto's diplomatic methods.

"'The frog that lives in the well knows not of the ocean'," he answered drily, in a proverb after the fashion of his guest. "So much does my estate here claim my time, when in residence, that I become most disregardful on issues of state until I am able to take up the thread of them again in Yedo. But I see that you have finished your repast, and I am sure you must desire to rest after the fatigues incumbent upon your long journey. May I not have the privilege of conducting you to your apartments?"

Thus was the inquisition brought to a close, without, however, the inquisitor attaining the desired knowledge. And Goto, as he prepared to disrobe himself, was feign to admit in the privacy of his room that "a snake has no ears, but its eyes are always open," adding, ere he closed his own eyes for the night, "that it was foolish to inquire the sea road of the mountain cutter, or ask the seaman the way to the hills."

"Yo-Akè was over close," soliloquized Goto from his futon. "I like not the weather at Biwa. 'Clouds foretell a change.' Tomorrow I depart for Yedo. 'Before falling, take your staff'."

And so saying, the great lord of the north fell asleep, dreaming that Asano Yo-Akè, dressed as a cook, was giving orders to have him pickled in sea-grass after the detestable custom of Saito of Satsuma.

V

THE TREASURE AND THE MASTER

A Hair, perhaps, divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER *too; . . . .*—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

AT LAST the first of old Nakahara's three great red-letter days had arrived; it was evening of the first day of the fête of the resin-raining of Biwa's mighty pine tree at Karasaki. Earlier in the afternoon, Lord Asano Yo-Akè had visited the scene with his household, according to his rigid annual custom, and after watch-

ing the concordance of three thousand odd votaries gathered under the enormous propped-up branches, had gladdened old Nakahara's heart by stopping to listen to one of his stories, and then withdrawn to Moto. Now, the sun having gone down in a burst of brilliant flame, the stars, lighting the skies in preparation for the moon's night ride, were hung out as carelessly by some hand as the lanterns in the boughs of the great tree.

Under a single mighty limb that swept out over the lake waters, old Nakahara sat watching the gathering night. Above and around the myriad lanterns twinkled merrily, and just without the circular sweep of pine boughs several Koya, or amusement halls, swung their fuda, the wooden laths billing their attractions to the view of the great throng. A constant stream of *sanpans* from Otsu, on the opposite side, bore the visitors from Sakamoto and the country around, and even from distant Kyoto, and on his own side of the lake, but farther up its shore, Nakahara could still make out the great walls of placid Moto, over which the trees were bending misshapenly to the moat waters. And all the while the bantering chatter of the country swain with the coy, pretty little tea-stall maids rose in a shrill medley on the evening air.

Presently some hanashika passed Nakahara on their way to the various Koya, where they would shortly appear before their admiring audiences, and bowed mockingly to the old fellow seated before his little piles of good-luck salt, while the crowd that followed at their heels began to laugh and point out to one another the lonely old figure puffing at his well-worn pipe.

"He needs no Koya," said one jester to another. "The ground itself is scarcely capacious enough to accommodate his audience."

"Yet he should use care that his listeners do not scatter his piles of salt in their hurry to hear his tales," observed the second, in mockery of Nakahara's loneliness.

A passing woman stopped, and regarded the old man in a spirit of compassion.

"Heed not these rough yokels," she said, kindly. "Mayhap the gods have in store for you gifts more eloquent than the *fuda* of lesser artists."

Nakahara paid no attention to these remarks, any more than he

had the insolent bowings of the competitive hanashika, whose recent intercourse with the "Foreigner" at Yedo and Kyoto enabled them to satisfy the popular craving with newer tales; yet, none the less, both bowings and remarks hurt him. He had once been accounted the greatest hanashika of the southlands, but, sorrowfully, he realized that the phrase "had been" expressed his condition now. As he placed the mirror of life to the back of his head, in a vain effort to ignore the tracery of the hastening years, it accentuated the furrows of time upon his countenance with a vengeful contrariety, and, looking at it from what angle he would, the mirror reiterated always the same tale—he was growing old; he was growing old. The vista of audiences once moved to tears under the mellow artistry of his story-telling, faded when he turned the mirror about, and he saw reflected there only the very few listeners whom he could now count upon because of their inability to afford the Koya prices. In the bitterness of his heart, Nakahara cursed the advent of "Foreign" ways into the beauty of Nippon, and their influence on his sacred calling of hanashika.

But if present circumstances were arrayed against him, Nakahara was not without hope, and like his lord, Asano Yo-Akè, was awaiting, in all anxiety, the return of the son of the great house, in the hope that it would bring with it a return of his lost prestige, because of superior knowledge of the outlands with which his young master would undoubtedly regale him. And—who knows? —some talisman from the wondrous West might yet render him greater than ever was there a hanashika.

While musing in this strain, Nakahara noted that a small audience of the poorest type had gathered around him. He blinked into the gentle glow from the fire-bowl of his tabako-bon, and scooped the charcoal in circles, thinking on his coming tale the while.

"Let us take a smoke," said he, finally, according to his preluding custom, at the same time plucking a live coal from the brazier as a pipe-light.

A norimono, which had arrived from the direction of Otsu, came to a stop on the outskirts of the great pine's branches, while its occupant, from his attire presumably a "Foreigner," stepped

out. Turning to some coolies, who followed with his luggage, he bade them continue on to Moto Castle, and directed his stave-men to await while he strolled about among the Koya and booths.

Nakahara, perceiving that his audience was on the verge of expectancy, laid aside his pipe and commenced his tale.

"Now, On To Waga, the Frog," he began, chancing upon the very story that Lord Saito had complained to Kiku-ko of having heard so often, "started from Kyoto to see Osaka, and by dint of much hopping finally arrived at the top of the hill, Ten-no-zan, which lies about half way between the two places. There On To Waga, the Frog, met another of his kind, who had hopped half way from Osaka to view Kyoto. And after both frogs had rested, they stood on tiptoe, gazing each toward the birthplace of the other, as they thought.

"'Now,' exclaimed the Kyoto frog, 'at last I see Osaka!'

"'And now,' said the Osaka frog, 'at last I see Kyoto!'

"So they looked for some time at the two cities, and then finally dropping upon their bellies, regarded each other fixedly.

"On To Waga, the Kyoto frog, was the first to speak.

"'I own I am disappointed,' said he, 'at having hopped this far, for I can perceive no difference between this Osaka and my own birthplace, Kyoto.'

"'And I also am disappointed,' rejoined the Osaka frog, 'I can see no difference between Kyoto and my own native city, Osaka.'

"So they each turned and hopped off toward their respective homes. But the facts were, the frogs had forgotten that their eyes were set in the backs of their heads, so that when they stood on tiptoe they consequently saw what was behind them, and not what was in front."

Old Nakahara paused in his tale, and his audience, glad of the excuse, arose to seek the comparative excitement of the toy-booths, or to gaze wistfully at the fuda before the Koya where the other hanashika would be rolling forth strange adventures of foreign lands. He noted the only too apparent relief of his listeners at the opportunity for leaving, and the red blood of shame surged to his brow as he called silently upon his gods to uphold him through the darkest hour of his life. Not even the gibes of the

hanashika and their following hurt him as did this, for, bitterest drop of all, he knew full well the cause. If only his young lord had returned—Tokiyori, the little lad who was wont to toddle about holding to the skirts of his kimono, and begging for just one more story from the then famous raconteur! Then, suddenly and occultly, a great light broke on Nakahara, for his time was near. He raised his voice, and caught the disappearing tail of the crowd, literally slewing it toward him, open mouthed, as he sent his last great challenge forth from under the far-stretched boughs of Karasaki-no-Matsu.

"So, On To Waga, the Frog, having started toward his birthplace, Kyoto, stopped at a stream to cool his skin, and he met there a fish to whom he told the story of his disappointment.

"'You are but a silly fellow!' said the fish. 'For could you not see that your eyes are set in the back of your head, so that when you thought you were viewing Osaka it was Kyoto all along that you saw?'

"'How should I be able to see my eyes if they are in the back of my head?' asked On To Waga, indignantly. 'And what must I do to get eyes in the front of my head.'

"'You must do even as I,' answered the fish, 'and go down to the faraway horizon, where the great sea ends. But, first, you will have to assume the form of a man, and to accomplish this you must climb up the great mountain of vision, and give battle there to No Binka, the Giant'."

Back came the departing listeners, for this sequel held forth the promise of a new feature. And, after them, attracting a crowd in his wake, sauntered the "Foreign"-dressed visitor. The fête-makers stared in polite awe, wondering who this might be, evidently a Japanese and yet garbed after the manner of the "Barbarian." The whisper ran swiftly about under the boughs of Karasaki's great tree until it reached the Koya, from where audience and hanashika poured forth to witness this unusual sight. So, singly and in pairs, one and all hurried in the wake of the stranger toward the great bough under which old Nakahara sat.

Nakahara sensed the gathering, and his worn-out old eyes failing in the dim light of moon and lantern to note its cause, sent a

silent prayer of thanks to his gods, as he drew on what time had left him of his former strength. He took up the metamorphosis of On To Waga, the Frog, and told of the great fight with the giant, No Binka, that raged from sun to sun, while the red blood oozed through the iron-shod joints of the gauntleted fingers, and trickled along the grooves of the sword blades. Then he told how On To Waga—triumphant and no longer the frog, but still eyeless—put forth on the great sea in quest of his eyes in a wondrous ship, whose masts were steeped in hammered gold, and whose sails were spun of the finest silk, and whose hull was of carven ivory.

A fire was flickering across his glazing features as the crowd of listeners, forgetting in their joy and lust of the new tale the cause of their being his audience, pressed closer and closer about his little piles of good-luck salt. Nakahara was singing his swan song—the saga of the brain of Yo-Akè his lord. But he could not know that.

Back and forward swayed the old body as he told of the rhythm of the sea with a poetry so pathetically graphic that his hearers could literally feel the biting of the spin-drift, and the moaning and soughing of the gales among the creaking masts. Then his eyes glinted like live coals, and the climax of his great story came like the bite of a sword blade from off his aged tongue.

"—and On To Waga, the same who had sailed forth on the great sea in quest of eyes wherewith to light his forehead, notched his prow on the bloodshot disc that hung burning over the distant horizon."

Where now were these upstart hanashika with their tales of "Foreign" seas and lands! The gaping audience, all else forgotten, drew ever closer to the old fellow as they hung on the wanderings of On To Waga, the eyeless. Nakahara rolled his own fast-glazing eyes, for the fight was all but too much for him, as he brought his banner up and flung it in the face of the Karasaki scoffers.

"Then On To Waga, the Frog, having reached the great fireball just as it shot down into the waving kelp, thinking that its glint in the sea-wash might be the eyes he sought, plunged his arm down into the dank, sucking ooze—and lo! he plucked from the slime

a jewel, which he bore to the shore. Thus was brought from the sea the rarest of all gems—which men have named Hope."

Nakahara's voice stopped abruptly, while his old body, its strength gone forth with the tale, sank limply. There was a little movement among the throng of listeners, and he in "Foreign" garb approached the form of the hanashika. A moment he scanned the time-dried features, and then laid his two hands on the bent old shoulders to raise them.

"O, Nakahara," said he, "have you forgotten me? Have you no word of welcome for Tokiyori, the babe whom you taught to walk?"

A beautiful smile illumined the features of the dying old servant, clearing away the creases and furrows of the years. He strove to raise himself on his elbow to bow to his young lord, but the shock had been too great for him. Eager hands raised him at the bidding of the "Foreign" young man, and bore him to the latter's norimono in waiting.

Then, in respectful attitudes, hanashika and revellers stood while the litter containing the great story-teller passed, but old Nakahara knew not, for, his last fable told, he had come, with the Alif, into his treasure, and into the presence of the Master.

VI

EARTH AND GRAIN

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turned
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE looms of the gods were busy that night, for while at Karasaki their shuttles were weaving the winding shroud of old Nakahara, at Moto they were threading a mantle of different design, yet both had as their warp the coming of the heir of the Yo-Akè.

Of late years, more especially since that season which had wit-

nessed the sailing forth of Lord Asano's son, a quiet reclusiveness had marked the Lake Biwa castle of the Yo-Akè. Moto, like a shore-cast beautiful sea shell, had losts its former life and luster during the absence of Tokiyori, but now, with his anticipated return, it was assuming brilliancy once more. Swift runners having borne to Lord Yo-Akè the tidings of his son's expected arrival at Moto, in the early part of the evening, the grounds had as if by magic burst suddenly into a perfect tousel of rich artistry from a thousand twinkling lanterns. From *tenshu* to bastion, from drum turret to yashiki waving banners formed a panoply so solid that it seemed as if only privileged stars could peer through it to note the happenings within the mighty walls. Serried ranks of samurai, in indescribably rich armor, were drawn up under Mata, before their nagaya, extending from there in two lines to the entrance of the yashiki itself, and on into the interior of the manor house, whose lower floor had been thrown into one great reception room by the removal of the partitioning fusima, while stalwart guards paced the great gateway. It was as though some unseen hand had lighted trees and earth, and with a magic wand peopled them with a world of gallant knights in brilliant array, and then drawn the skies down to make a tapestry for the gorgeous setting.

Within the great lower room of the yashiki, so formed, sat Lord Asano Yo-Akè upon a raised dais, about which were grouped his household councilors. Sage, thoughtful men, these, their experience and wisdom written upon their countenances, so that a shrewd observer might have hazarded that, with a change of island policies, they would play a most important part. And just beyond them, though somewhat nearer the dais, was Kiku-ko with her bevy of ladies-in-waiting, the beauty of their kimonos high-lighting the impressive gorgeousness of this picture set in old Japan. Leading straight from the entrance of the yashiki to the dais, a roll of gold cloth, brocaded into a thousand phantasies of design and conception, awaited the steps of the coming heir, and, about all, in attitudes of the greatest reverence and respect, knelt the vast gathering of household and castle servants. The waters had borne Tokiyori Yo-Akè back to the land that awaited him; his

own were assembled to do him honor, and one had died that the swan-song of his tarrying might be sung.

Presently a slight movement fluttered along the lines of samurai without, so that the attention of the whole concourse within the yashiki was riveted toward its entrance. Then an officer of the guard entering, approached the body of councilors and spoke in low tones to old Kano, its chief executive, who in turn bore the tidings to the ear of Lord Yo-Akè. It seemed that coolies bearing luggage and boxes had just been admitted to the castle, reporting that they preceded the returning heir of the house, who had stopped to witness the fête at Karasaki. Lord Yo-Akè frowned at the latter part of this information; it was not thus that a son should hasten his return to an awaiting father. This malingering was wanting in both filial respect to him, and reverence to his position. But to Kano he merely nodded his head in confirmation of the report, as the latter resumed his place in the council. Yet, despite his outward serenity, Lord Yo-Akè's heart was bitter within him at this humiliation, for he was aware that not one of those close enough to him—including Kiku-ko—to catch Kano's low words but must feel as did he himself. In fact the impression this information made had already served to create an unfortunate and erroneous undercurrent of opinion against Tokiyori, even before his appearance among them.

Then, from far down the road, they heard the expected sounds at last, in the faint, distant beating of staves and cries of stavemen, telling all that a norimono was approaching. Louder and louder the sounds grew, until the eager listeners could make out the words. What strange happening had occurred? For in place of the expected "Make way! Make way for the noble young lord, Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of Moto and Shima!" was heard, "Make way! Make way for the mortal remains of the great hanashika, Nakahara, a faithful servant to the Lord of Dawn!" It was thus that Tokiyori sought to honor the dead friend of his childhood. Before an explanation could be rendered of the unusual circumstance which told the watchers only that one of their household had unexpectedly and suddenly passed from them, a sentinel challenged, and the norimono was admitted to the castle enclosure. Next

steps were heard approaching between the ranks of the samurai, and those within the yashiki turned their faces towards the entrance, an expectancy most intense in its eagerness written upon each countenance. The moment had long been anticipated, and many were the pictures conceived by all concerning the manner of man that the wanderer might be, until to each he had assumed, aided by old Nakahara's imagination, the portraiture of a martial hero. At last the expected steps sounded at the yashiki entrance, and a little gasp manifested itself in the apartment. Kiku-ko raised her head from her position upon the mats, and descried, through staring eyes, the slight figure of the traveler approaching. Thus she remained as his shadow fell across her, stunned, for the instant, incapable of thought.

It was a trying moment for all. By an iron effort Lord Yo-Akè preserved an immobile countenance. A more pathetically incongruous climax to this scene of oriental mediævalism the gods themselves could not have arranged. On every hand were knights in full armor, ladies in flowered kimonos, and a vast concourse of the retainers and dependants of feudalism, and facing them alone was a young, slightly-built man in "Foreign" garb—black frock coat, pearl grey trousers; in his hand a silk hat and cane—occidental progress against oriental chivalry! And the wearer of this uncouth attire was a Yo-Akè, a lord of Moto and Shima—a Lord of Dawn!

For a breath that seemed to Kiku-ko an eternity, the universe stood still. Then suddenly the very earth itself, room, soldiery and servants reeled and spun in a mad purposeless whirl before her eyes—until she became aware that this strange being was speaking.

"I have returned to you, my father," he was saying in a quiet, small voice. And after what appeared to her an interminable interval, she was conscious that the daimio himself was uttering the one word, "Irasshai."

That was all. A cold, indifferent, unemotional welcome, such as with which one bids the stranger enter. Irasshai! Yet Kiku-ko noted the words of the son, and the reply of the father, but subconsciously, for through her mind ran but the one theme: "Is *this* the man whom I must marry? Is this the man?"

Of what further happened she was but dimly aware. There was a good deal of orderly commotion occasioned by the individual presentation of heads of the various household bodies, the individual and privileged greeting by a few well-remembered old family servitors, and then the formal presentation of the heir to the whole assembled mass of family retainers and dependants. After which Kano, in his capacity of chief of the Yo-Akè council, administered to Tokiyori the tremendous oath of loyalty to the family and country—a custom among the Yo-Akè upon an heir's attaining his majority—while Mata, as captain of the Yo-Akè samurai baring the great blade of Oni Yo-Akè, touched it lightly to the young man's forehead, thereby setting the imaginary seal of the founder of the family upon the oath. At last, the imposing ritual was complete, and Tokiyori Yo-Akè had come into his own; nor had he come empty handed, for he had a something to add to the heirlooms of his fathers in comparison with which their deeds and legends would sink into mediocrity. The council, samurai and servitors filed from the great room in orderly precedence, till at last remained but Lord Asano Yo-Akè, Tokiyori and Kiku-ko.

The daimio beckoned his ward to his side.

"Permit me, my son," said he, conventionally, "to present to you your future wife, my ward the Lady Kiku-ko Shimadzu of Tsushima. I believe you were too young," he added to Kiku-ko, patting her head in fatherly fashion, while he still kept his gaze averted from his son, "to recall much of your affianced at the time of his departure from Nippon."

Kiku-ko bowed low to both noblemen, and then advanced a few steps nearer Tokiyori.

"It is a great privilege," said she formally, "to be afforded the honor of adding my welcome to that of your august father. I trust a peaceful night's rest may recompense you for the fatigues of your journey home, and prepare you for an enjoyment of its beauties on the morrow."

Again she bent low to the daimio.

"With your permission, my lord," she concluded, "I will wish you o yasumi nasai."

Tokiyori stood watching her as she withdrew, noting contem-

platively that she was exceedingly pretty, dainty and aristocratic, until the voice of his father recalled him.

"My son," the daimio was saying, "messengers from Otsu informed us of your arrival there in the early part of the evening. The journey hither is but short, yet it was well into the night ere we were permitted to extend our welcome to you."

"I stopped at Karasaki for the moment, to rest my stavemen," explained Tokiyori, "and was detained by the death of old Nakahara."

"Nakahara dead?" exclaimed the daimio.

He remained a moment in thought.

"I regret to hear of such a sad happening on the night of your return to us," said he in tones that contained both a note of sorrow at the cause of the delay, and relief at the explanation afforded. "Nakahara has been a faithful servant to our house for many years. I would have you always remember, and reward, faithful service, Tokiyori. I had a great affection for Nakahara, he was undoubtedly a seer."

"His death occurred at the climax of a story he was telling," explained Tokiyori, "and although I heard but the end of the tale, it much impressed me. I believe it was to some extent prophetic of my journeyings and return with a jewel named Hope. I had his body conveyed hither in my norimono."

Lord Yo-Akè nodded, and paced the apartment in meditation, while Tokiyori awaited the further pleasure of his father. Finally the daimio halted before his son, and bent his gaze intently upon him. Then he pointed solemnly to the great sword of Oni Yo-Akè that rested once more in its rack.

"My son," said he, impressively, "you doubtless recall to whom that sword belonged?"

"Perfectly," answered Tokiyori.

"Nor, I am sure," continued the daimio, indicating a little shrine with a burning lamp, "can you for one moment have forgotten to whom that ihai is inscribed?"

"It is to my mother in the Meido-Land," answered Tokiyori, in hushed, reverent tones.

"Twelve years ago," continued the daimio, "you and I bade each

other farewell upon the beach at Nagasaki, and you then swore to me an oath. Do you recall that, my son?"

"I have forgotten that neither," replied Tokiyori. "It has been faithfully fulfilled."

"What then," asked Lord Yo-Akè in a low voice, and just as though there had been no intervening years since when the first utterance of those words had determined him in dispatching his son abroad, "is behind the visit of these 'Foreigners' to our shores?"

Tokiyori hesitated, feeling it impossible to sum up the knowledge gained in twelve years of observation and study in one word that could be comprehended by his father.

"There are many governing motives, my father," said he, at last, "greed, the desire of acquisition, curiosity, a belief that to the occidental is given the possession of the earth, and possibly the hope of colonization. Yet, to assign to each its rightful value, it will be necessary that I take you with me on my travels, in spirit. For only by a recital of all that I did and witnessed can the answer to your question be comprehended.

The daimio pondered a moment.

"It shall be as you say," he agreed, finally. "And as the story may take some time in its telling, we had best defer it until tomorrow. In the meantime, let me assure you that it gives me every pleasure to bid you yoki irasshai, Tokiyori; you are very greatly welcome to me, and mine."

He led his son to the little shrine.

"Let us say our prayers to the ihai of your mother before retiring," said he, kneeling.

VII

A HEART'S DESIRE

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

All that night Kiku-ko tossed on her *futon* in a fever of contending emotions, the harpies of humiliation and despair claiming her successfully as their prey. And all the while within the great castle walls the night watchman clanged his little bronze rings to mark the periods of his vigil, their musical jingling growing ever

fainter as he walked from tenshu to tenshu, until it ceased completely, only to start afresh from the direction of the *taiko-yagura*. Each of these hour calls, that brought to the sleeping fortalice the assurance of safety and peace, brought to the sleepless Kiku-ko a thousand searing phantasies to rend and destroy her own rest and happiness.

Finally the jingling of the watchman's rings told her that it was the zenith of the night, and so wanting but a short hour to the dawn. She arose, and throwing a light covering over her shoulders, sought the little upper balcony that ran about the shoji of her apartment. Saving for the glow from the andon in her room and the lantern of the night watchman, the castle enclosure was lit only by the stars sprinkled in the forest of the skies like the toro in the woodland glades of Moto. She gazed up into the great infinite beyond, of which she believed she had once been a part with Saito, and it seemed to her as if those stars were but little studded bolts, holding the awful bars in place that shut her from that life and from the soldier, till she felt as though some terrific force had lain roughly hold of her and was dragging her irresistibly from that old world so dear to her.

Shivering, she reentered the room and stirred the smouldering embers of her hibatchi, for the chilliest, darkest hour of the night was heralding the dawn. To the vigilant watchman below it brought cheer in the knowledge that his tour of wakefulness would soon be over, but to Kiku-ko it told but of the coming of the day when she would have to listen to undesired words from the suitor arranged for by her father. Again she crossed to the shoji, and looked without. Overhead the "sky lanterns" were beginning to blink, for their oil was running low, and away beyond them—cycles away—a lone star shot suddenly through space toward the south. There it dissolved in a shower of sparks—directly over Satsuma, thought Kiku-ko. Perhaps it was a maiden love-thought of hers winging its swift way to Saito; she prayed the gods he might read it so that they might thus be enabled to converse with each other through the dreary years to come. Good night, little eyes of the sky! The morn was breaking chill and white, yet there was still the blood-red of the day to be reckoned with.

Unable longer to contain her thoughts within the confines of her room, Kiku-ko dressed, and quitted the yashiki for the iris pond that lay near the great gate. Thus it was that Tokiyori, arising and sliding the shoji of his room, spied her in the early morning of the perfect summer day, and again he took thought on the exquisite daintiness of this woman who was to be his wife. From watching her he glanced about at the remembered scenes of his boyhood, his mind naturally reverting to the memories they invoked. There was the pool at the foot of the little waterfall from which old Nakahara had once rescued him, and just beyond the wistaria bower where the old hanashika was wont to squat and tell him wondrous tales of giants and fairies. It seemed now but yesterday since these scenes had had a life for him, and he sighed a little as he realized how very different was the present, and how still more foreign would be the future. Old Nakahara would never tell a story again in this life—and himself? These environs were all unchanged, his life was no longer affected by them. Circumstances were responsible for this, of course—when are they not? It was a sad reproach against them that he perceived for the first time that he had had no young manhood—nothing but an all too short childhood, and then the leap across the years to a thoughtful, prematurely staid age. The responsibilities lain on him by his father had robbed him of the joyous sensings of development, and bent him with the greater weights of life. Musing in this strain, he dressed hastily and left the yashiki for the iris pond.

There he came upon Kiku-ko, apparently so enwrapt in thought as to be unaware of his presence, until his first words fell upon her ears.

"The iris are fortunate," he remarked. "They are permitted to open their eyes to your beauty this morning. I envy them."

"I love the iris," she answered, bowing to him. "Their very name, 'ayamè,' is the soul of poetry itself, nor do I think that anything can be more perfectly beautiful than these buds as they break forth upon the world. They are early somewhat this year. Perhaps it is in honor of your homecoming."

"More likely mere curiosity to observe what manner of person I am," he answered lightly. "Yet I should feel flattered that even

the iris deem me worthy their attention. I had more than feared my very existence would be forgotten in Nippon."

She stooped to bury her head among the buds, then plucking one whose first petal was slowly unrolling, presented it to him.

"I had no opportunity of offering any attentions to you last night," he continued, "owing to the publicity of our meeting. Permit me to do so now, and pray believe that nothing but the presence of others could have kept me from your side."

She realized that some answer to this was necessary, and yet still so heavy was her heart, she could not bring herself to make the obvious reply. Finally she hazarded:

"I suppose Nippon must seem to you very—how shall I say it—small, insignificant, uninteresting perhaps after your long sojourn among so many mightier nations?"

"Say rather that I find it more beautiful than ever," he corrected, smiling. His smile was one of the pleasantest things about Tokiyori, for through it seemed to peer his true, inner self—tender, poetic, magnetic.

"I have found nowhere," he went on, "fairer landscape, richer verdure, nor anything that could approach my country in the rare simplicity of its charms. Among the 'Foreigners' there is ever an overglutting in the display of things of beauty, so that an individual perfection is lost in the bewildering extravagance of the whole. To us a single bud cadences in myriad tones; to them its best perfection is found in tier upon tier of heaped and smothering flowers. So is it also with their surroundings and their personal adornment, where beauty exists not in the thing itself, but in its numerical multiplication. One needs seek Nippon to learn the exquisite perfection of simplicity."

"Then one may feel assured that you have never forgotten your birthland?" she asked.

"Nor its people—particularly one," he answered.

"It will be a great solace to Tonosama," said Kiku-ko, "to know that he has been in your thoughts so often. I know, myself, that not a day since you left him has passed but that he has planned of your return, and of the many things in store to make your future bright. And poor old Nakahara, too! How he would picture your

wanderings to us, and the hour when he would be privileged to behold you again! Indeed," she concluded, "I doubt if you will ever realize the anxiety and loving thought that was given you during your absence, daily, hourly."

He came a step nearer to her side.

"And you," said he, "did you too think about me? Did you also picture what manner of man I might have grown into? What manner of man it was to whom you were promised?"

"Often," she replied, frankly. "Indeed it would have been impossible to have remained long in Nakahara's presence without seeing vivid representations of you. His conversation, and latterly his tales, were exclusively on that one topic. Most dearly of all he loved to picture you as climbing great mountains in quest of hidden treasure. It was thus I came to think of you."

"Until I shattered your illusion by the manner of my advent," he rejoined, smiling. "I quite appreciate that point of view, I assure you. Yet, despite the very poor figure I am aware I must have presented in contrast to the surrounding galaxy, I would have you believe that old Nakahara was not altogether wrong in his surmises. Without doubt he possessed very wonderful qualities of so-called foresight, which I fear we did not always give him due credit for. For instance, it was due, I have heard, to a tale of his concerning a samurai and a crow that the incentive to my voyagings was given birth in my father's mind, and it was but last night that another story of his, concerning an eyeless frog, prophesied my coming, even before he could possibly have been aware of my return. So, if he has also told you that I was climbing great mountains in quest of hidden treasure, you may believe it to the full. But for the height and difficulty of the ascent I should have been back here long since. Nakahara was not merely a hanashika, he was a seer."

Kiku-ko made no pretense of following the drift of all this. She realized, dimly, that Tokiyori was himself speaking allegorically when referring to his mountain climbing, for his material personality divested him, to her mind, of anything savoring of mighty physical deeds, such as might have been performed by Saito. Beyond that realization, however, she could connect nothing, for the

real object of Tokiyori's travels was but known to his father and himself.

"Many things are, of course, hidden to me," said she at last, "for I am only a woman. Nor can I pretend to understand these references of yours and Nakahara's. Yet I, too, used in my way to follow an imaginary course of travel for you through 'Foreign' lands. I would like to know whether my vision at all approached the real truth. Will you not tell me something of life among the 'Barbarians?'"

"Gladly," he answered. "Yet there are 'Foreigners' resident now, and for some time past, in Yedo, whom you have doubtless seen."

"Only through the portrayals by others," she explained.

"A delineation of the 'Foreigners' would entail a rather too lengthy story for your patience, I fear," said he, "for they are so numerous in nationalities, and so varied in local customs, that it would require many hours of closest attention to such a recital before you would begin to understand their modes of life. It occasioned me, even when among them, many years of laborious study and observation before I could approach to a comprehension of them. Rather let me describe to you something of the characteristics of their women—a subject which I think will prove of greater interest and which is really one of primary importance in the study of all races."

She assented eagerly, seating herself on a nearby rustic rest, and there among the flowers of old Japan, girt in by the walls of a feudal castle still in its mediæval existence, Tokiyori, the then lone connecting link between past and present, between orient and occident, painted for the woman who was shortly to become his wife a picture of the new Japan to be, and which he had traveled so far and long to attain knowledge of. He touched on the individual life of womanhood, upon its fulfillment in the home life, and its relation to the life of the whole nation, instancing the fame and histories of women whose names had made the world ring of their majesty and learning, and Kiku-ko followed each phase of his recital with mingled feelings of curiosity and awe. His canvas was fresh, and the portraitures he sketched upon it stood forth startlingly to her. These beings were the antithesis of everything femi-

nine in Japan. They married according to individual choice, had pursuits and pleasures apart from their household cares, and even expressed opinions boldly in gatherings where men were present. She could hardly conceive such a state of affairs, and she felt in her insularity that such creatures could be deserving of very little of the respect he so evidently accorded them.

"It is by a reflection of such lives that a nation attains its noblest growth!" said he, carried away by his subject. "Wherefrom does the babe draw many of its most lasting impressions—impressions that remain ineffaceably foundational throughout its whole life? I think, without doubt, at its mother's knee. Supposing then that mother to be qualified not only to teach it of the material exigencies of its life, but to enter into the spiritual phases as well, helping and suggesting each step, each new study—would not such instruction, coupled with a father's larger aid, tend to make of that babe a mighty man when it reaches years of mature thought? It is the purest reason. Yet how may our wives and mothers be qualified to rear such types of men when we keep them apart from our real lives and thoughts? The whole national fabric is but the combined principal of each of its individual families, and the individual family life is but the life of each of its members combined. What wonder, Kiku-ko san, that the Japan of our system of family life could make no stand against these 'Foreign' nations?"

What answer she might have made to this he did not learn, for at that moment a servant, seeking him, bore the intimation that the daimio was now ready to receive his son. So, perforce, Tokiyori left the woman who was to become his wife without satisfying himself as to her views on life, which after all may have been at that time no very unfortunate thing. Thus do the gods in their infinite wisdom lead our blind and ignorant feet into paths we otherwise would fear to tread.

VIII

THE FILING OF THE KEY

The Vine had struck a fiber, which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout,
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE sun had stretched the shadows almost to the extent of their tensity that afternoon before Tokiyori's recital of his travels to his father was completed. He had striven to purge his narrative of all excepting the essentially vital, and in this had been assisted from time to time by questions wisely put by the daimio. But, even

with this, he had found himself taxed to the utmost to "compress his Iliad into a nutshell." Lord Yo-Akè, realizing this, felt his confidence in his son's acumen fully justified, and his belief in him once more restored.

The interview ended with but slight comment on its conduct from the daimio, for it was a tenet of his to observe everything and say little; to the practice of this he largely owed his diplomatic success. As his son retreated through the fusima, he fell to studying intently some maps and drawings left by the latter on his writing table. After a few moments of silent observation of these, he bowed his head as though in confirmation.

"Such is the inexorable law of life," he mused. "Either as individuals or as nations we accumulate forced debts that must be discharged whether there is the wherewithal to satisfy them or no. It is the outcome of our habitually natural greed that has its foundation in a still existant primeval instinct of self preservation. I doubt that we evolve but along our lines of least resistance—our surface veneer. Yet Nippon has been too long a frog sucking in the moisture from its own well, alone. And now that to this well have come other frogs, the home frog must seek fresh pools for its maintenance."

He picked at random some pictures and a diagram from the little pile of maps upon his table. They were representations of the partly constructed Suez Canal.

"O, wise nation of the English!" said he. "What culmination of a finely exercised judgment, when allowing others to perform the work from which you reap your profits. Gods of my house! what a little people have been we of Nippon! Beneath our very hands lies an enormous virgin ocean that we have failed to see, its billows beating upon our shores we in our deafness have failed to hear. We, the natural jewel of its diadem—the only possible convergence of its traffic routes, know not even the meaning of the words 'Trade' and 'Commerce.' Comes not such ignorance upon us because we of the daimioates, with our samurai, have blinded the land with our one-purpose creed—Bushido?"

Laying aside the pictures and diagrams, he bent over a map, which he studied intently a moment. The indications thereon were,

of course, indecipherable by him, but the area represented had been traversed by his son, and that son's finger had traced the salient points not once, nor twice, but a score of times that very day.

From India he drew an imaginary line to and through the Suez Canal to England, and smiled. From the eastern coast of the United States he made a similar line toward the southern extremity of the great continent, pausing at the narrow strip of land that formed the Isthmus of Panama. He regarded this intently. Then he observed the great sweep of the Pacific slopes of America, and shook his head as though at an unsolven problem.

"I did Tokiyori an injustice," he observed, half aloud as was his habit when engrossed in thought, "when I censured him for his prolonged tarrying in England. He chose as his particular study the undoubtedly wisest and greatest traders of the world. I confess to an admiration for this nation. It encourages others to dig waterways which it shall eventually absorb to its own exclusive interests and profits; it builds a mighty concourse of trading ships, and polices the seas for these with fighting boats and chains of fortresses. It seems to me the acme of wisdom and power when a nation arranges to carry the world's necessities in its own ships, for it is carrying the life of the world to its own profit. Yet with all this commerce carrying and control of countries and oceans it seems that England is but a little group of islands—*as are we.* And Tokiyori says that it is from another country—India—that she draws the bulk of the resources for her vast undertakings."

He regarded the map again, fixedly.

"India is—one might hazard—at least an hundred times further from England than China from us. May not China prove as vast and wealthy as this India? And is she not in her hermit state like ourselves, another isolated frog?"

He touched with his finger the pictured Pacific ocean and the little groups of islands that dotted it.

"A chain of fortresses and a concourse of war boats," said he, "and this sea might change its name to the *Lake of Japan.*"

He laid aside maps, documents and pictures carefully.

"So," he concluded, "it seems that Trade spells Wealth, and

Wealth, Power. Therein lay the wisdom of Nakahara's crow when it advised his samurai to put aside the sword and study carefully the roadway to the City of Desire. My son has returned to me with unknown wisdom from the outer world. This may be of material benefit to the Mikado if directed to his attention."

For a long time he remained sunk in thought, reviewing the political situation of his country, the fast failing Tokugawas, and the chances of the Mikado's party to wrest the power from the usurping Shogunate. Finally he called a servant and bade him summon to him Kano, his chief of household council. In the interim of awaiting the coming of the latter, Lord Yo-Akè prepared a short document with great care. He had just concluded this when the councilor entered the apartment, bowing low to his lord.

"Arise, excellent Kano," said the daimio, "and draw near."

"It is my wish," he continued in lower tones, as Kano came closer to his side, "that this night you journey to Kyoto and seek audience of the Mikado. Present to him my humble and devotedly respectful salutations, and say, 'My lord, Asano Yo-Akè, of Moto and Shima, has at your Majesty's disposal an hundred thousand koku of rice and six thousand samurai. He but craves your Majesty's seal upon this document."

He handed it to Kano, who bowed again.

"Your will is a law to me, my lord," said he simply.

Lord Yo-Akè watched the withdrawing councilor out of the tail of his eye.

"Kano is growing old in my service, and is very faithful," he reflected. "I will instruct Mata to watch his going to, and returning from, Kyoto, so that there may be no possible intercourse with other travelers. A hint of this message would ruin me and my house. Mata, too, is born to my service, and of proven fidelity. One may trust a friend with one's money, a woman with one's name, but neither with one's secrets."

Again he summoned his servant.

"Instruct the Lady Kiku-ko that I request her presence here as soon as may be possible," he ordered.

IX

YOUTH'S MANUSCRIPT CLOSED

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

LORD Yo-Akè greeted Kiku-ko pleasantly as she entered his room.

"My daughter," said he, as was his accustomed mode of addressing her, "I have sent for you because the time is now near at hand when you are to become actually—what you have always

virtually been—one of our family. You and I have both waited the return of my son so long that I can see no further reason for prolonging the date of your nuptials; and let me assure you that I have every belief that this union will prove both a happy and blessed one, and that my most earnest prayers and wishes are all directed towards the welfare of yourself and my son, in the life you will shortly enter upon together."

He picked a sealed roll of writing off the table before him, holding it in his hand while he continued addressing her.

"Thirteen years ago," said he, quietly, "your father, Lord Suki Shimadzu, was my guest at Shima, in Yedo. The occasion, as you now know, was one of the saddest. He had attempted to give access to his island port, Idzu-ga-hara, to some 'Foreigners' as a place where they might repair their ships, and found a colony. In this he preceded events, but whether he was right or wrong is not for us to say. He was awarded the death by seppuku in a mandate which the Shogun petitioned the Mikado to utter. I was your father's closest friend, so that it was not strange that he should seek me out at such a time. On the last night of his life he handed me this sealed packet, requesting that I deliver it to you upon the eve of your nuptials with my son."

Lord Yo-Akè held forth the packet to Kiku-ko, impressively. "After you have read this, he concluded, you must be the sole judge as to whether the contents are of such a nature as should be communicated to me or not. In any case, you will, I am sure, understand that I have no thought of forcing your confidence in any way."

She bowed to him, feeling that the interview was terminated.

"A moment more, my daughter," said he, as she prepared to leave, "I desire that you make what immediate preparations are necessary for your coming wedding, which—unless otherwise prevented by unforseen circumstances—will take place before another moon is full. You may withdraw to the privacy of your own apartment now, as I am sure you must be anxious to learn the contents of your father's letter."

He bowed courteously in dismissal, and Kiku-ko, returning it profoundly, left him to the contemplation of his reading and writ-

ing, while with quick steps she sought the privacy of her own rooms.

There she broke the seal of the packet with a feeling of awe, and drew forth a small, tightly folded slip of paper, with a roll of writing. The former she undid first. It contained a small jade tablet, and upon the paper enfolding it was written: "Once the property of your mother. Keep it in the memory of her whom you never knew."

She pressed the tablet to her brow reverently, and then placed it carefully in a little lacquered case that stood upon a small dresser before a mirror of polished steel. The second enclosure proved to be more lengthy than the foregoing, and ran in this wise:

"To my beloved daughter, Kiku-ko Shimadzu;
"Your father's love.

"My Daughter: Death is about to remove me from you before we have scarce come to know each other, yet it is to you alone that my thoughts turn on this my last earthly night.

"When your dear mother, my beloved wife, died at the hour of your birth, I then swore that nothing I could accomplish should be left undone to provide for your future welfare. Yet how little do we blind mortals forsee the purposes of the gods! for I, your father, must even now pass from you, leaving you naught more than that with which a beggar may pittance his offspring—love.

"With the justice, or injustice, of my ordered death we need have no further concern, for that question may only be answered by the conscience of the one who commanded it, to his gods. Therefore, I pray that you do not allow such a question to harass or perplex your future. But the results of that death materially affect both you and your welfare. Concerned mostly with this, I have sought out my old friend, Lord Asano Yo-Akè, at Shima, and he has most generously agreed to receive you into his own family as one of its members, thereby assuring, in a measure, your future. Lord Yo-Akè is a man of vaster influence than is generally conceded him by the superficial observer, and because of this, and also of the position he holds on the Baka-fu and in the private councils of the Shogun, I have every hope that he will

be enabled to attain for you the restoration of my estates, forfeited to the Tokugawa. Yet, whether or no he is eventually successful in this, you will always be far removed from want, both because you will be to all intents and purposes the daughter of one of Nippon's most powerful nobles, and because, in due time, you will become the wife of his son and heir. So we have agreed. Therefore, Kiku-ko, I conjure you to always regard Lord Yo-Akè with feelings of the deepest gratitude, and to render him that unquestioning filial respect and obedience that you would have given me had I been permitted to live to receive them.

"Of Tokiyori Yo-Akè, your future husband, I know little, saving that he is a shy, quiet lad, studious and thoughtful beyond his years. No doubt his father destines him for great political significance some day. Yet not alone because of the securing of your material future have I arranged for your betrothal to this lad, as what follows will show to you.

"Upon this night, the eve of my death, I have heard an impressive story told. It concerned a samurai and a crow; its author a hanashika—Nakahara by name—in the service of Lord Yo-Akè. At the conclusion of the tale, the samurai was made to see the error of the time-worn road he purposed following, and to find the right way to the City of Desire. Nippon's City of Desire is soon, I believe, to be unfolded to her vision, and of all her samurai but one, I feel—Lord Asano Yo-Akè—will be able to point out the right pathway to her. Yet it has always been Lord Yo-Akè's practice to remain in the background, working through the outward efforts of others. Such being the case, I doubt not that the first to traverse this new and difficult road to our City of Desire will be Lord Yo-Akè's only son, your future husband.

"In the Meido-Land, dear daughter, where I shall so soon be with your mother, my happiness will be complete when I am permitted to watch you and your husband leading our nation to this great achievement; yet, I warn you now that you may find the way difficult in the extreme, and that from yourself only can come the strength to overcome its obstacles, for he who walks beside you can not drag you along it, so much will it tax his own utmost strength to traverse it himself.

"And now a last word as to the full meaning of this union of yours with Lord Yo-Akè's son. It will of course ally the Satsuma family influence with the Yo-Akè power, thus consolidating the midlands and the south; but, still more significant and glorious, it will, I hope and believe, virtually unite our old Japan with a new, the result of which should be a great, irresistible oneness. From the outcome of all this, my daughter, it is my fervid hope that a child shall spring, half Satsuma, half Yo-Akè; half old, half new Japan—a saviour and a leader to our newer and greater country. So then will it happen, Kiku-ko, that my death shall not have been in vain if from it one with the blood of Shimadzu shall be born to lead his country to the City of Desire.

"The dawn approaches.

"Farewell; the gods have you in their keeping.

"Your father,

"SUKI SHIMADZU,

"Lord Suzerain of the Isle of Tsushima."

Kiku-ko laid the letter aside. Just beneath her window some woodland doves were billing and cooing among the bushes that girt the shrubbery path. Suddenly she dropped her head in her hands, bursting into sobs.

Lord Saito, returning from Kyoto, arrived at Moto late that day. Since he had left Kiku-ko last—the morning following the incident of his vision, told her in the wistaria bower—he had come to the conviction that he could no longer exist without her. He had at first striven to fight off this growing desire, fearing that a yielding to it might end in the ruin of the career he had mapped out for himself, for he was worldly wise enough to perceive that a wife would but retard a young soldier's ambitions and was a luxury to be best enjoyed when able to rest upon the laurels gained by martial valor. Yet, master as he was generally of his actions and impulses, he was forced to admit to himself finally that, when weighed against Kiku-ko, his military ambitions became secondary. When this had become fully clear to him, he decided to lose no time in securing the prize he so ardently coveted, and although aware that Tokiyori was the nominal affi-

anced of Kiku-ko, he believed that Lord Yo-Akè would scarce care to offend so powerful a family as his by refusing to accede to his wishes in this respect. Thus the same hour that found Kiku-ko perusing the letter from her father, saw Saito alighting from his kago in the courtyard of Moto.

He found the daimio in his own room, and, being yet unaware of the return of Tokiyori, proceeded to come immediately to the purport of his unexpected visit.

"I have given myself the honor of again seeking your lordship," said he, with soldierly bluntness, "in order that I may place my plea in person before you. For some time past I have known that I love my cousin, Kiku-ko Shimadzu, your lordship's ward. I am, of course, aware that there may have been at one time some idea expressed between my uncle, Shimadzu, and yourself regarding a possibility of Kiku-ko's one day becoming the wife of your son. As, however, time has elapsed without his return, and as I am assured my cousin would welcome a marriage with me, I venture to hope that the indefiniteness of the former arrangement may lead you, sir, to an acquiescence in accepting me in the light of a suitor."

He ceased, and Lord Yo-Akè regarded him attentively, seeking some means of refusing this proposal without giving offense. Saito, he realized, might, on account of his prestige with samurai and populace, be very necessary to his plans shortly, and it would never do to antagonize him. It was a difficult and delicate position. On the other hand, Saito's plea could not be entertained because it was necessary that the Yo-Akè family should have the support of the Satsuma clan in what Lord Yo-Akè proposed undertaking, and that support could only be controlled by this alliance of Tokiyori with Kiku-ko. Saito must be gently apprised of Tokiyori's return, and shown that not because of that return—which might serve to antagonize his jealousy against Tokiyori—but because of far greater things concerning the whole nation, this wish of his must remain ungranted. Lord Yo-Akè, perfect in his knowledge of human nature, determined to make his appeal to the young man's vanity.

"Naturally this request comes to me in the nature of a complete

surprise, said he at last, in answer to Saito's plea. "I can somehow scarce conceive that my little ward has grown to a marriageable age. How time slips by us, unnoting!"

He rose from his seat.

"Will you not accompany me through my poor grounds?" he asked. "I have been so long confined to this room today, by matters of business, that I feel the need of fresher air."

As they descended the shrubbery path that led to the brook and the bower, one of Saito's two swords caught in the branch of an encroaching bush, whereat a frightened wild dove suddenly arose and flew across the castle walls to some foliage without.

"Ah," observed the daimio, who noted every incident, however trivial. "It seems that Nature has herself answered your question. The dove is the love-bird, we have many such at Moto. Yet it wings from its mate, you see, at the sound of arms, nor will it return I fear until the evening has set in."

He stopped short on the pathway and regarded his young guest with a kindly expression.

"My lord," said he, "absurd as it may appear, the action of that bird exactly typifies the condition of us nobles of Nippon today. There is a coming call to arms soon, of which not one of us is unaware. Whichever cause we each may support, there is scarce one of us, I think, who is not putting aside all selfish desires and indulgences to bend our efforts to the greater situation. With the prospect of this bloody war before us, the chances for a young samurai of your fame and rank are incalculable. Under the most favorable conditions, marriage at such a time could but serve to hamper such prospects and blight such a career. It is not in the hour of our rising, but in the evening of our fulfillment, that we should think of building about us a nest, and rearing others to perpetuate a name then gained. Believe me, I speak as your well wisher. Your family and mine have ever been upon the most amicable terms, and your uncle, Shimadzu, was my closest friend. An arrangement of marriage was entered into between him and myself for my son and his daughter on the night just preceding his death."

A footstep sounded upon the bridge, and Saito, glancing up,

perceived another of about his own age, walking toward them in deep thought. As the newcomer caught sight of them he hastened his steps.

"Permit me, Lord Saito," concluded the daimio, "to introduce to you my son, who but a short four-and-twenty hours since returned to his home from his travels among the 'Foreigners'."

Saito, realizing that, because of the return of the wanderer the pact of marriage must be fulfilled, accepted the doom of his hopes. It was the unwritten law of his caste, that stood higher than mandate of Shogun or Mikado, and he would not have dreamed of rebelling against it. With samurai fortitude he concealed his feelings and gave a formal greeting to Tokiyori. After a few moments of desultory conversation the latter remarked to his father that he had been inspecting the arrangements for Nakahara's funeral on the morrow. This gave Lord Saito his opportunity, and after expressing his surprise and regret at the death of the old hanashika, he prepared to take his departure.

"Believe me," said he, "I would not have dreamed of intruding upon you at such a time, for I well know the regard in which your former servitor was held by your family. Farewell then, my lords. Pray make my excuses to my cousin, Kiku-ko. I journey to Satsuma immediately. If there is aught in which I may be of service, command me."

He sought his kago, accompanied by Tokiyori, and Lord Yo-Akè stood watching the two young men as they disappeared in the direction of the nagaya. Suddenly he became aware of a low sobbing from the room almost overhead where Kiku-ko had retired to read her father's letter. He guessed that she must have heard his refusal of Saito's proffer, and witnessed the latter's departure.

"Ah, life! life!" he mused sadly, as he turned back to enter the yashiki. "How few of your pleasant dreams ever become realities! How seldom do we reach the goal that we set out to attain! The pictures so vari-hued that you draw to the eyes of our youth seem but grey monochromes when viewed with the color blindness of middle age, else would we mortals become as are the gods."

That night the dove returned to its nest in the shrubbery copse, but the tears had so blinded Kiku-ko's eyes that she saw it not.

X

THE NIGHTINGALE CRIES TO THE ROSE

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to' incarnadine.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

SOME eighteen months later—to be exact, the twenty-sixth of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight, old Yedo was in the last evening of its life, although none dreamed how tremendously different the coming era would be. True, for some time past events had heralded a changed city, yet still the

appurtenances of the Shogunate were predominant there, and the Baka-fu—although the Shogun, Tokugawa Keiki, had virtually resigned office—continued to hold its meetings in the palace overlooking the bay. Desultory fighting had been in progress for some time past, resulting in the burning of the yashikis of the Satsuma clan in Yedo, and one or more night attacks had been perpertrated, by troops unknown, against the "Foreign" embassies, but no decisive blow had been struck by either side in the civil strife, and for the present the Mikado and his court continued resident in Kyoto.

Allying himself to this latter cause, as he had a year since informed Kiku-ko were his intentions, Saito had now assumed command of the Emperor's forces, but as to his present whereabouts none seemed precisely informed. In Yedo itself, at this time, there were but few of the generally resident nobility left, for the concentration of opposing forces in their different encampments had necessitated that the supporters of each side should join the main bodies with their retainers-at-arms.

In the knowledge of the turmoil natural to a city at such an epoch it was with many misgivings that Lord Asano Yo-Akè, still resident at far away Moto, directed his son to take up his residence with his bride at the little besso, or dower house, well within stone's throw of the mighty walls of Shima, the Shiba fortress in Yedo. Yet, without doubt, this step had been one of prime importance, for in the light of Yo-Ake's plans for his family's future, it was imperative that he should be kept accurately informed on what was happening at the nation's capital city. Deeming it necessary, therefore, to keep his son in dangerous proximity to the zone of probable warfare, he had taken the precaution of protecting his person against possible molestation by providing him with a document of safe conduct from the Mikado, that same which he had dispatched Kano to Kyoto to procure in anticipation.

For the rest, Prince Goto still retained his place on the Baka-fu, to which recently had been added, to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Lord Yo-Akè, one Lord Saburo Ikeda, a noble of lesser rank. Thus stood affairs in midwinter of the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight.

About Shiba, the woods lay so deathly still under the soft fluffing of the constantly-falling flakes that the snapping of twigs and branches by the weight of the snow seemed like a series of rifle volleys. As the winter day drew to its close, the great red globe of fire sank behind the powdery foliage, while night stole over the city. Presently a muffled step broke crisply through a glade leading to the tombstones of past and gone Tokugawa Shoguns, and the figure of a man emerged into a patch of blood-light that dripped upon the upturned tops of the cairns through winter rents in the trees. On the head of this pedestrian a basket-shaped hat descended to completely hide his features, while a thickly wadded kimono enveloped his body to his geta, the wooden clogs that shod his feet. At a casual glance he appeared but some errant minstrel, yet to a close observer something in his poise and step might have told that two swords would have become him more naturally than the flute he carried. He passed down a pathway, lined on either side by great stone lanterns—the gifts of fudai daimios to their former masters—and halted beside one whose inscription announced that it had been presented, many years before, to the memory of "The Illustrious Temple of Learning"—the posthumous title of a dead Shogun—by Lord Suki Shimadzu of Tsushima. Here he rested a few moments in thought.

Far distant, through the naked trees, lay Yedo, with its now snow-topped houses and palace. Nearer still, was Sengakuji, where the seven-and-forty ronin lay close to their shrine, and through an avenue of nude limbs and bare trunks could be caught a glimpse of the frowning walls of Shima, and the little besso nestling under their protection. And, all about him stood, as silently as himself, cairn upon cairn, each with the mitsu-aoi—the three-leafed asarum—carven upon it to tell the passer-by that here beneath his crest a Tokugawa kept his crestless tryst.

A long time the minstrel stood, wrapped in the silence of the graves, his face turned citywards, then slowly and with bent mien he made his way through the Shiba woodlands towards where the besso lay.

Within a room of this sat Kiku-ko, superintending some final arrangements of the apartment, for a dinner was to be tendered

there that evening to a small party of friends by her husband and herself. In the interim of directing the servants, she glanced from time to time at a missive which she held, and from which she appeared to gather the little frown of annoyance that overshadowed her pretty countenance. Finally she crumpled this and dropped it among the coals of an hibatchi glowing close by her side.

"'Tis too bad!" she muttered to herself. "This interminable worry about these 'Foreign' embassies has become well nigh unbearable. If Tokiyori must needs spend almost his entire time with them, why should he deem it necessary to invite friends to a dinner? This is the second occasion within the month that we have had guests coming to us by invitation, and the master of the house absent during the evening. I will no longer bear it in silence, embassies or no embassies, 'Foreigners' or no 'Foreigners.' If they so fear ronin attacks that they dare not abide in their embassies without the presence of Tokiyori, let them betake themselves back to the lands from which they came."

She paused suddenly to listen, for from without the soft plaintive notes of a flute fell upon her ears. Then after a moment of prelude a low, rich voice took up a song of her native Island of Tsushima:

Canst thou tell is it day, is it night on the island,
Thou of my dreams whom my soul longest for?
Are the pine trees still true? Do the waves lash on high, and
Breaking jade green, do the breakers still roar?

Is the sea-breath that same when—the gulls o'er us sweeping,
O thou of my dreams whom my soul longest for,
Thou asked for my heart, and I gave it thy keeping
As the swirl break jade green on the Tsushima shore?

Does the moon climb the waves still, the lagoons to play with,
Thou of my dreams whom my soul longest for?
Is it sooth? is it phantasy? or is it fey-myth
That answers me only the breakers' dull roar?

Was it day?—nay, I know not—or night on the island,
O thou of my dreams whom my soul longest for?
For only the moan of the pines on the highland
Can tell where thou art, and the breakers' dull roar.

As the song ceased Kiku-ko arose and crossed to the shoji looking down on the little courtyard. The besso stood against a slight rise of the ground, so that while its front was on the same level as the walk and the woodlands, its rear, with its lower story, descended abruptly to the courtyard. Thus as she came through the shoji out onto the small veranda—impelled by curiosity because of the song relating to her birthplace—she looked down directly upon a wandering troubadour, the one who had lately stood by the gift-lantern of her father in the Shiba glade. At sight of her the singer bent his head low.

"Your song is very pleasing to me, minstrel," said Kiku-ko. "Will you not step within and rest yourself? There is a small entertainment here this evening, and it may be that you would care to play and sing to our guests."

"I humbly thank you," replied the voice of the songster, muffled by the great basket hat that hid his features, "but I am but a flighting bird of the snows. I light here or there for the moment, throat my simple notes, and then must wing my way to other copses."

"A sorry payment for the pleasure you give," said she. Ordinarily she would have bidden one of the servants attend to the man's wants and make him some small present, but for some unaccountable whim she lingered in the cold of the veranda.

"When the bird's chant can win for it the plaudits of a beauteous lady, what greater payment could be desired?" asked the minstrel.

"Yet the listener might feel a desire to hear more of so rare a songster," she rejoined.

The singer approached a step nearer.

"A boon, then, most noble mistress—a boon!" said he.

"Granted, if possible, O minstrel," she replied.

"Nay, it is but a small favor," said he. "The snow bird, aweary with its flightings and the cold, accepts the shelter of your eaves."

Without waiting for her further consent, he proceeded to climb upwards by the balcony supports. As his head came level with the low railing, his hat was pushed from his features. Kiku-ko stepped back a pace, and caught her breath sharply.

"Saito!" she exclaimed.

"Hush!" he replied warningly, clambering on to the veranda.

"It is I, Kiku-ko," said he in a low voice, coming quickly to her side. "Are there any within who may see or hear us?"

"Not if we stand here," she answered in the same cautious tones, taking a step into the shelter of a cupboard that formed an accommodation for the outer storm-shutters when not in use. "Here we will be unobserved, and there are none within excepting the servants, who are all engaged in preparing for the entertainment this evening. Yet, I know not if I do aright in thus clandestinely speaking with you," she added uncertainly.

Saito waived the question. He was spying out the city in disguise, and had been unable to resist the opportunity once again to see Kiku-ko and communicate certain things to her ear.

"I noticed as I passed your gateway," said he, "that preparations were—as you say—in evidence for the coming of guests. Whom do you expect this evening? Believe me I ask the question from no motive of impertinent curiosity."

"We are giving a small dining party to Prince Goto and his friend, Lord Ikeda," she explained. "And we expect also some neighboring ladies, Nui-ko san and Toyo-ko san."

"None of whom have as yet arrived?" he added.

"Nay, but I expect them at any moment now."

"Then, excepting these guests, there will be no one else here this evening?"

"Only a little girl—Lord Ikeda's daughter, Ren-ko," she answered. "Tokiyori is absent attending to something at the 'Foreign' embassies."

"Then there is no one to be taken into account excepting Goto," mused Saito. "Tokiyori will be away, and as for Ikeda—pah! Steel tempers not from gold, nor courage from a miser. I need scarcely employ others to assist me, yet it were wisest—"

She drew away from him, frightened at his wild words, that seemed to her to contain a hint of danger.

"Why do you wish to know who will be here tonight, Saito?" she asked.

He took her little hand within his own strong one, and fondled it reassuringly.

"I should have explained to you before," said he; forgive my abruptness. Kiku-ko, I can no longer exist without you, and tonight I am going to make the great effort to win you. Nay, listen, heart of mine, and say nothing. None but you know that I am in Yedo tonight. Scarce a week ago the troops of the Baka-fu burned our yashikis here, and we have determined to avenge this. Our Satsuma samurai are now hidden in different parts of the city, and at a preconcerted signal will attack the 'Foreign' embassies tonight, because they are the especial charge of the Baka-fu. Ikeda, who has been appointed to their care by the Shogun, has withdrawn the bulk of the Yaconin guards with which they were till lately furnished, so the task will be doubly easy to us. With the downfall of these, Tokiyori Yo-Akè will be forced to flee also, and will doubtless seek to escape with them from Nippon on some 'Foreign' ship because of the hatred and mistrust he has already aroused among our people by his pandering to the barbarians. In his disgrace will also be included that of his father, and so with the downfall of the Yo-Akè, and the consequent desertion of you by your husband, you will be relieved from further obligations to your father's given word. In the meantime I shall be near you to protect you, and as soon as these rebels against the Mikado are driven out of the city, will take you to our own kinsfolk in Satsuma."

Not for one moment, despite her fidelity to her ties, had Kiku-ko forgotten her love for Saito, and it seemed to her as though the gods had at last decided to take pity upon her, and grant her that one only happiness she desired above all things. Then the memory of her father's letter came suddenly to her, and its closing paragraph. She pressed her hands over her heart and, straightening herself, caught Saito's arm as he stood awaiting her answer.

"You say my obligations will be fulfilled, Saito?" she asked.

"Yes, heart of mine; entirely," he answered.

She drew back from him and shook her head sadly.

"Not yet," she whispered, "not yet."

"Not yet!" he repeated in bewilderment; and then as her meaning dawned on him, stood staring at her in sorrow.

"I am to become the mother of an Yo-Akè," she sobbed, hiding her head in her kimono sleeve.

Steps sounded at the front of the besso, and the voice of a servant announced,

"The Lady Nui-ko, and the Lady Toyo-ko."

XI

THE NIGHT BEFORE DAWN

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

WITHOUT further words, Saito descended noiselessly from the balcony, while Kiku-ko, composing herself, entered through the shoji into the reception room, bowing to her just-arrived guests.

"It is most considerate of you to grace our poor entertainment this evening," said she.

"We are honored beyond measure," replied the two ladies, in unison.

They were twins, about thirty-and-five years of age, unprepossessing and unmarried, never seen apart, rarely speaking other than in a sort of mental symphony, and, if report did not exaggerate, inveterate gossips. Once, in a moment of unguarded mirth, Goto had referred to them as "the double *fusima,*" explaining that one painted side slid out to let you in, and the other painted side slid in to let you out. This was considered as very witty on Goto's part by his friends, because the jovial prince had once, it was known, been marked by the two prim maidens as legitimate prey, and narrowly escaped with his bachelorhood intact.

"We trust your honorable husband is in the enjoyment of richly deserved good health," continued the two ladies.

"He is, I thank you," answered Kiku-ko, still nervous from her recent meeting with Saito, "but unavoidably detained at the 'Foreign' embassies."

"Oh, the embassies!" chorused the twins. "Indeed it is a pity that they are permitted to exist so unrestrictedly in our city."

"But why?" asked Kiku-ko, apprehensive of Tokiyori's safety at the mention of the embassies.

"Because, my dear, they do say," began the Lady Nui-ko, "that is, of course—"

She hesitated, and her sister continued for her.

"It is reported so authentically that one is feign to believe it."

"To believe what?" asked Kiku-ko, bewildered.

Both ladies looked at one another, kittenishly, until Nui-ko san finally took upon herself to complete what she had begun.

"Well, of course, my dear, one would scarcely care to mention such things saving in the presence of a lady of your known goodness, but they do say that the 'Foreign' embassies are fast ruining the womanhood of Yedo."

"We at Shiba can not be too thankful that we are so far removed from their dangerous influences," supplemented the Lady Toyo-ko.

Kiku-ko, regarding the two prim maiden ladies before her, felt

almost inclined to smile, until the allusion to the embassies again recalled to her mind Saito's intended night attack upon them, and the consequent danger to Tokiyori.

"Lord Ikeda, who is in charge of them, is to be one of our guests this evening," said she. "He will accompany Prince Goto, with whom he is on terms of very close companionship, I believe."

"Scarcely that," dissented Nui-ko san, grasping with avidity at the opportunity of a little gossip, "as the prince has been absent from Yedo much recently upon his northern estates, owing to the death of his only sister, and her legacy to him of her orphan son, Taro."

"Which has, of course, kept the prince in the north pretty constantly of late superintending the education of his young nephew," added Toyo-ko.

"Only partly the cause, sister," supplemented Nui-ko. "It is said that the prince was confined there to his futon by reason of an illness brought on by overeating—"

She was interrupted by a beating of staves and hoarse cries of "Make way! make way for the most exalted prince, His Illustrious Highness Matsuo Goto, Lord of the North!" "Make way for the norimono of my noble Lord Saburo Ikeda of the Baka-fu! Make way! make way!" Then came a scuffling of feet at the gateway of the besso, and a huge voice bellowed—

"'At the gate of a widow gossips will gather.' Ahai! thou ruffian staveman, set not my norimono down so hastily! I tell you, Ikeda, I put not overmuch faith in these repeated rumors of ronin attacks upon the 'Foreigners.' Since the assassination of some sea samurai of the Russian nation it has become the fashion to cry 'Fire! fire!' upon the slightest pretext."

The voices grew plainer, and presently a servant entered the room.

"His Illustrious Highness Prince Matsuo Goto, Hoku-no-kami," he announced, "the noble Lord Saburo Ikeda and his daughter, the Lady Ren-ko."

Prince Goto advanced into the room first, perforce, for his bulk, which often had been compared jestingly by the populace to

that of a famous wrestler, claimed the lion's share of the opening. Behind him came Lord Ikeda, a smallish man, whose shifty, crafty eyes, set in a rather weak countenance, noted each occupant of the room before he was far enough within to bow to his hostess, and following him, his daughter, a demure little girl of not more than ten years of age, who kept her eyes dropped shyly to the floor. The arrivals bowed to their hostess and then to the other two guests, kneeling upon their cushions, already placed, so that Goto was upon Kiku-ko's right, facing the little company, and Ikeda upon her left, while little Ren-ko knelt quietly upon a mat between the two maiden sisters.

"'Stronger than a yoke of oxen is the drawing power in a single strand of a woman's hair'," grunted Goto, in a voice which reproduced the surf-beat upon his own northern shores, and made an adjacent andon flicker. "If we are culpably late in arriving 'tis not for want of cursing our stavemen; Ikeda aided me nobly. But I fail to perceive your husband, Lord Tokiyori. I trust no mischance has befallen him?"

"My husband is detained at the 'Foreign' embassies," replied Kiku-ko. "I confess myself somewhat anxious concerning his absence."

She turned to Lord Ikeda, who, as the chargeé of the "Foreign" residents in Yedo, would know best regarding their welfare.

"I presume there is no question concerning the security of the embassies from chance attacks?" she asked of him.

"Pray have no uneasiness upon that score, Lady Kiku-ko," he answered. "So safe do I feel the embassies now to be that I have this day ordered a further reduction of their yaconin guards."

Kiku-ko was almost thrown into a state bordering on hysteria at the reception of this last piece of information. In the knowledge of what she knew from Saito, she could only wonder how one so obviously deceived concerning the true state of affairs as Ikeda could retain his position on the council as one of the nation's trusted advisers. The voice of Goto recalled her to her surroundings.

"'You can not weave a garment with one thread, nor make a forest with one tree'," he observed bowingly, indicating the two sis-

ters. "I compliment you, Lady Kiku-ko, upon having two such charming neighbors."

Lord Ikeda again claimed his hostess' attention.

"The prince and I were discussing the 'Foreign' embassies on our way hither," said he. "They have much to be thankful for in your husband's care of them."

"And in yours also, my lord," asserted Kiku-ko with hidden sarcasm.

"'A fruitful tree tells of a good husbandman'," quoted Goto. "Yet, considering the number of lawless dai-sho now infesting the city, the 'Foreigner' sleeps not on a futon of roses."

Servants entered, some with the ante-prandial tea and tobako-bon, others with steaming dishes for the small tables.

"In fact," said Ikeda, a gleam of amusement in his eyes, "the present position of the 'Foreigner' in Yedo may be likened to that of our eels in Nippon. They repose for awhile among the sea weed in apparent safety. Then Prince Goto is heralded adown the road, and the poor eels are hastened toward their next re-incarnation."

"It is not I who am always the ronin," grunted Goto between whiffs of his pipe. "Saito of Satsuma once played that role upon some eels of my ordering. 'A gentleman should not stop to retie his sandals beside another's melon field'."

"Does any one know where Saito is at the present?" asked Ikeda, and Kiku-ko felt herself flushing guiltily as she kept silence with the others.

"Teaching the Mikado's kuge how to pickle eels in kelp," remarked Goto with ponderous sarcasm. "Saito is like to find himself also hastened toward his next re-incarnation."

"No politics tonight, I beg of you," laughed Ikeda. "We hear overmuch of them nowadays in the council chamber. How beautiful it is among the solemnity of your Shiba foliage," he continued, addressing himself to his hostess. "As we came through the park, it had the appearance of a drape of dark hanging velvet, through which the moon, breaking over the snow-powdered branches, wove stitches of beautiful silver design."

"The moon threads often weave a fairy-land," sighed Nui-ko, with a languishing look in Goto's direction.

"A fairy-land sewn with myriad beautiful elfins," added Toyo-ko, also looking longingly at Goto.

"Elfins of the brain," mumbled Goto, a trifle nervously.

"Elfins are of the skies," lisped little Ren-ko prettily, whereat all smiled.

Goto, whose conception of a dinner was a place where people foregathered primarily to eat, had been glancing about him in fidgety fashion at the steaming platters with which the servants were decorating the little tables. He now bowed to Kiku-ko in joyous anticipation.

"'Tongue wagging may produce clothing'," he observed, jocularly, "'but it needs ploughing to produce food.' I perceive the delicious repast is ripe to our chopsticks."

At a glance from Kiku-ko the tables were arranged separately before each guest, and with the beginning of the feasting, geisha and top-spinners made their appearance. Goto seized the opportunity to swallow his food and drink his sakè without the necessary interruption of conversation.

"Your honorable father-in-law is, I understand, permanently resident at Biwa-ko," observed Ikeda to Kiku-ko during the lull occasioned by the retirement of the entertainers.

"Yes," she answered, "although he travels often of late to Hiogo, being much interested in 'Foreign' shipping."

"'You can not study swimming on the tatami'," muttered Goto between mouthfuls. "Yo-Akè had better have taken up his residence in Yedo for that purpose."

"There is certainly a great increase of 'Foreign' shipping here of late," agreed Ikeda. "I was amazed recently at noting the number of alien warehouses in course of erection along our harbor shores. The 'Outlander' is undoubtedly bringing much wealth to our city."

"'Even a mountain monkey, with adornment, will be nice'," admitted Goto, glancing about him for the sight of a servant.

Again the geisha reentered the apartment, bringing with them some little dancing girls who performed the "Flight of the Sparrows," with arms outspread in quaint, graceful mimicry of the birds, aided by huge flapping hats. During their dance, Ikeda de-

voted himself steadily to the sakè cup, with the result that, when Kiku-ko chanced to glance in his direction, she observed from his flushed countenance that the liquor was affecting him.

"All this talk of 'Foreigners' must be very awesome to such a little girl as Lord Ikeda's daughter," she observed, hoping to divert possible attention from him. "It must seem to her like stories of some hungry wolf about to devour her home. Does it not frighten you, Ren-ko san?"

"Nay," lisped little Ren-ko, "because if the wolf tried to hurt me I should feed him until he were so full of nice things that he fell asleep, and then I should steal out with a great sword and kill him."

Her father appeared too sunk in reverie to notice this remark of his daughter, but Goto regarded the little maiden quizically.

"'The smallest pools are often the deepest'," he observed to the company generally. "I like your answer, little Miss Ren-ko, it contains much food for thought. Servant, another cup of sakè."

"The 'Foreigner' is not the worst wolf Nippon has to deal with," hiccoughed Ikeda, scowling slightly. "We have greater traitors within our gates."

"'Dwellings have rats; nations thieves'," agreed Goto, sagely.

"Which time will undoubtedly adjust," continued Ikeda, with that wise look often assumed by an intoxicated person who has said something that has not the slightest bearing upon the subject.

"'The road of time has no gatekeeper'," objected Goto at random. He, too, had not the slightest idea to what Ikeda's observation referred, but, having himself drunk deeply of the mellow wine, considered that a proverb would be most appropriate to the remark.

Lord Ikeda frowned. He found these repeated interruptions by Goto annoying. Kiku-ko, noting the condition of the two men, with the quick intuition of a hostess, and fearing a possible "scene" if this banter were carried too far, hastened to change the subject.

"I am sure the 'Foreigners' should feel deeply grateful to Lord Ikeda for his care of them," said she.

"'Beware of committing the care of fish to the cat'," reminded Goto, with his usual aptitude at quotation.

Ikeda fastened his glassy eyes with an unsteady expression upon Goto's wine-reddened countenance. The liquor lent him a degree of courage.

"Your highness does me an—an unpardonable injustice," he stuttered, hiccoughing again. "If there were any danger to the 'Barbarians' I trust you will all do me the justice to acknowledge that I would be the first to court it, and the last to leave its vicinity."

Unfortunately, every one present believed that just exactly the opposite would be the case, and smiles were with difficulty repressed by the ladies. Indeed, so near did Nui-ko come to permitting her risibilities to escape her, she had to clap her hands to hide her confusion, crying, "How brave! how brave!"

"'The dog may bay at the moon, but will not leap toward it'," guffawed Goto, who did not seek to conceal his mirth.

Ikeda gripped his table with both hands to steady himself as he strove to arise, and Kiku-ko interposed pacifically.

"We should strive, the poets tell us, to view things through others' eyes. And so long as Lord Ikeda sees that the 'Foreigners' are secure in his care, the rest of us may accept his view."

She glanced appealingly at Goto. Goto proved a bad ally.

"Ho! ho!" he chuckled. "'The bat hanging upside down laughs at the topsy-turvy world!'"

Ikeda was on his feet like a flash.

"Your highness infers by that," he began—when the sudden din of a furore without drowned his further words.

"Slay! slay! slay!" roared a multitude of voices, magnified an hundred fold by the intense stillness of the woodlands.

Goto bounded to his feet, and without ceremony rushed to where his swords had been left at the entrance to the room.

"By Uji-no-Mitama!" he shouted. "It must be the ronin!"

The dread word struck Ikeda sober, and a chill of terror at the hearts of the rest of the company. Again came the roar from without, paralyzing the little gathering with fear at its ferocity.

"Tokiyori Yo-Akè! Tokiyori Yo-Akè! Slay the traitor who would sell Nippon to the 'Barbarian'!"

Ikeda seized his daughter by the hand and ran toward the rear exit of the besso, followed by the cowering Nui-ko and Toyo-ko. Only Kiku-ko remained, kneeling at her little table, too frightened to move. The clinking of steel and oaths of men crashed louder still, and a sharp report rang out, followed by a yell and a groan. The sounds of the pursuit were closing about the besso deafeningly. Dimly she heard Goto cursing as he strove to pry his huge bulk over the low balcony rails.

With a crash the front entrance to the house gave way, falling inwards, and suddenly the bodies of men in armor were tumbled into the room indiscriminately. As these disengaged themselves from the human maelstrom, she perceived the form of her husband lying motionless upon the mats. She arose, terrified, all unknowing what was to follow, when Saito suddenly appeared in the broken-in opening, the samurai falling quickly into some sort of military precision under the steely glance of his eye. He came swiftly to Kiku-ko's side.

"I regret this scene," said he hurriedly, "but you had best retire to your own rooms till I send for you."

He turned to a samurai near him.

"Search the body of that traitor," he commanded, pointing toward the motionless Tokiyori, "for evidence of his infidelity to the Mikado."

The samurai bent at the word, and plunging his hand within the kimono of the fallen man, withdrew it presently, holding a piece of paper. Saito took this, and perceiving that it bore the imperial seal, read aloud:

To all our subjects,

Heiki.

You are hereby enjoined to aid and protect the bearer of this, Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of Moto and Shima, as is the will of the Mikado.

. . . . . .

A servant was bearing Kiku-ko to her apartments in the besso when suddenly the throes of a physical agony shook her frame. Then she knew.

"O, goodness of the gods!" she sobbed. "O, goodness of the gods! Saito! Saito!"

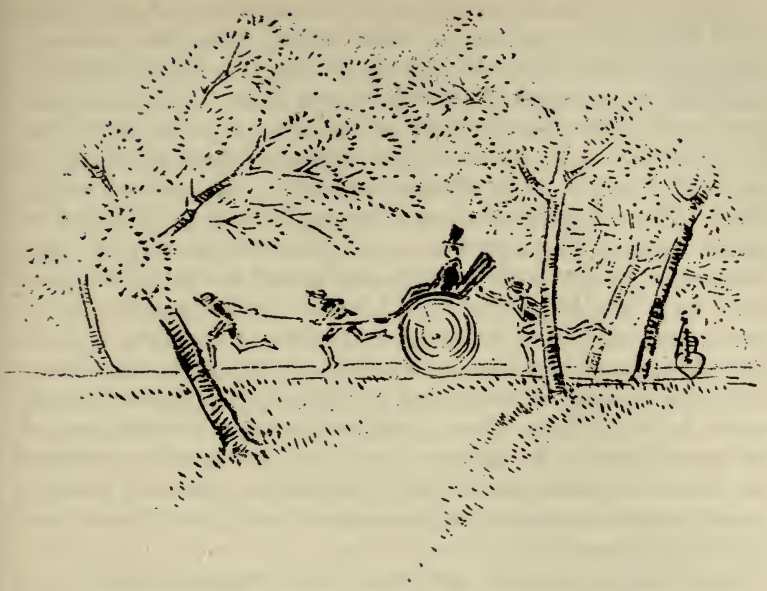
That night the beginning of the great three-days' battle burst over Yedo, ending in the triumph of the Mikado and the dawn of the era Meiji. But Kiku-ko noted not, for a little babe lay nestled at her breast.

PART II

DAWN

Quoth the samurai, I follow

LEGEND OF ONE, NAKAHARA,
HANASHIKA TO
LORD YO-AKÈ



I

ON WITH THE DRAMA

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

IT WAS spring in the seventh year of Meiji (1875), and the early cherry petals of Shigatsu (the fourth month) were dropping from the mukojima trees upon the waters of the dark Sumida. Although still early forenoon, the Cherry Avenue swarmed with urbanites, who loitered about its tea-booths and yosè, for not yet had the iris budded at Horikiri.

Suddenly a jinricksha, drawn by tandem runners and pushed from behind by two others, came rolling down the avenue at seemingly terrific pace, shaving the wheels of other vehicles miraculously as it passed in and out among them. In it was a stout gentleman, perhaps fifty years of age, clad in black frock-coat, in the buttonhole of which was an enormous nosegay of the season's offerings. A high silk-hat sat rakishly on one side of his head, while a waistcoat of wondrous prismatic hues girded his ample form, calling attention to the fact that its wearer was a bon-vivant—a fact still further emphasized by the heavy jowls sunk deep in a high European "choker" of the period, and the merry lines about the twinkling eyes. Striped lavender trousers, spats, kid gloves, and a malacca walking-stick with a carven ivory dog's-head handle, as mighty as a bludgeon, completed his equipment. As his 'ricksha shot in and out among the traffic, he suddenly exclaimed in a mighty voice: "'It is not possible to surpass the feet of a bridegroom'! Ho, thou ruffian runners! Is this a seemly manner to convey a personage of my dignity to call upon a brother nobleman?"

The 'ricksha stopped, and one of the runners, drawing the sleeve of his jacket across his brow, bowed defferentially.

"Your honor instructed us," said he, "to convey your honor to Shima Castle with all speed. It is a long distance to Shiba."

"Baron," corrected the stout gentleman, sternly; *"Baron* Goto, forget not that, fellow. As for what you say regarding haste, perhaps you are right—'the speeding season may not turn aside for the growing grain.' Yet, proceed more warily, I pray you. I would not that the Marquis Yo-Akè should be inconvenienced by the reception of my mangled body."

Again the runners started on, but in more leisurely fashion, and soon the 'ricksha and its occupant were lost to view.

The startling change manifest in the once Lord of the North—now General Baron Goto—was typical of that which had come over Nippon in the past seven years. The results of that battle, beginning on the night of the twenty-seventh of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight—during which Tokiyori Yo-Akè had received his almost fatal wound from the victorious im-

perial troops commanded by Lord Saito of Satsuma—had established the restoration of the Mikado as actual governing head of his country, thus stamping a new era upon Japanese history. By one alone was it viewed with anything approaching equanimity—Lord (now Marquis) Asano Yo-Akè, whose brain had planned, and hand shaped, this entire innovation.

This very morning on which Goto was hastening to Shima, Tokiyori and his father the marquis were strolling about the castle grounds immersed in conversation relating to a recent movement on the part of the imperial cabinet toward the important question of student emigration.

"You are not then in favor, I understand, of our student emigrants being given the means to support themselves whilst studying in 'Foreign' lands," observed Tokiyori. "Personally I question the popularity of such a restriction. For instance, there are to my knowledge many sons of peers preparing to travel abroad for purposes of study, yet I doubt if any of them would care to assume menial capacities in order to promulgate their knowledge."

"Possibly not—at first," agreed the marquis, tranquilly. "And yet, if it were shown them that it was for Dai Nippon, and the *wish* of the Mikado, I think our emigrants would discover an immediate desire to carry out the contexts of such passports, in the spirit as well as the letter. We are in many respects a peculiar nation, my son, and our strongest asset is the intense spirit of loyalty implanted in each and every one of our people."

They walked on for a few moments in silence, and finally the marquis observed:

"In reply to your objection, my son, it seems to me that in the very fact of furnishing passports to our students to study abroad you furnish them also with the means of self support. In any country a man who can not support himself under normal conditions is a ronin—a vagrant—a nuisance to his community, and with the lack of his capability toward his self support goes, likewise, his self respect. The issue is clearly criminal. But, I fail to perceive why his own country should furnish the funds to his maintenance, to the benefit of an alien country. Particularly in our case we need the monies of other countries coming to Japan,

not Japanese money going to swell the revenues of other, and possibly inimical, countries.

"Still," objected Tokiyori, "there is no doubt that the assumption of menial positions among the 'Foreigners' by our young students of rank and position will be a bitter pill for them to swallow."

"My dear son," commented the marquis, serenely, "since when has it been regarded a demeaning act for a samurai to penetrate the ranks of the enemy in disguise—even when the carrying out of such disguise entails acts of a menial character upon its wearer?"

"I grant your argument," answered his son, finally. "Nevertheless I predict that we shall hear the same clamorings raised as when Baron Goto—at your suggestion—drew upon commoner as well as noble to officer his army."

"I think results have justified Goto's decision," replied the marquis. "In any case the army was demoralized by the Bushido training it received at the hands of Saito, before his retirement created the vacancy for Goto. Heredity is, no doubt, a very admirable thing, yet cold facts have an unpleasant habit of writing strange entries regarding efficiency between the lines of peerages. Ideally it would be most pleasing that our army should be officered by our great—our nobles—each holding command according to his rank. Did the entailment of the rank entail also the wisdom and prowess of the founder of the rank I would be one of the first to decry any other order. In our imperfect mortal society it seems that we must of necessity bow to the pranks of fate, and when the gods see fit to place the intellect of a lord in the material head of a commoner, it would be folly of us humans to question the wisdom of the gods."

In their walk they had approached near a small but deep pond that lay in the gardens girt about with high bushes. Through a vista of these Tokiyori perceived his little seven-year-old daughter, Aysia, calling and gesticulating to her nurse across the pond. The cause was at once apparent, for in the center of the little lake her toy sail boat—a "Foreign" importation—had been blown by the light breeze upon a tiny gravel-topped island, grounding

firmly. From the opposite bank the nurse was vainly endeavoring to reach the craft with a long bamboo pole—a hopeless task, as the island was more than three times the length of the pole from the bank. Perceiving the fruitlessness of her nurse's efforts, the little maid glanced about for other aid, and espying a boy, kite flying in the barrack enclosure, called to him.

The lad came running quickly to the scene, his kite under his arm. In appearance he was about thirteen years of age, quite sturdily built, and with a countenance that betokened an exceptionally keen alertness. Upon being shown the cause of the trouble, he promptly removed his sandals and, tucking up his kimono about his knees, prepared to wade out to the little island. Aysia had watched these preparations for the releasing of her boat with evident interest, and now, realizing what the lad contemplated, sought to dissuade him.

"You can't walk out there," said she; "you'll be drowned. One of the men servants fell in there the other day, and it was so deep that he had to be pulled out."

The boy stood irresolutely a moment. Had he been a lad of the occident he would probably have solved the problem by gathering up what rocks he could and flinging these at the boat until she was released from the island—regardless of damage. Being a Japanese, this lad set himself to attain his end without impairing the serviceability of the craft, and for that purpose sought to discover the cause of the trouble. This, to his mind, evidently was the wind which was holding the boat directly against the island. He perceived that if the wind were blowing from the opposite direction it would float the boat loose. He could not reach the boat to change its position, nor could he alter the island, but it suddenly occurred to him that he might change the direction of the wind.

He returned to where he had left his kite—a large square one —beside Aysia, and, breaking its long string into four equal pieces, tied one to each of the four corners of the kite. Then, handing two of the strings to Aysia, he took the remaining two into his own hands and, bidding her follow his instructions, ran around to the opposite bank of the pond. Tokiyori and his father watched with both interest and pleasure the little scene enacting.

Under the lad's directions, the kite was manipulated in such manner that finally it rested upright upon the island, so that the wind beat upon it and drove back against the little boat in tiny sharp gusts. The boy dared not move the kite against the boat for fear of breaking some of the toy's delicate rigging, but soon the deflected wind began to take effect. Its mainsail was swung to leeward, until, jerking from side to side, the jib caught the full slant of the wind, driving the boat out into the water, whence, of course, it was soon blown to the shore. His task completed, the boy quietly gathered up his kite and prepared to depart.

At this instant Lord Yo-Akè, followed by his son, emerged from the bushes that had hid them from sight of the actors in this scene, the former beckoning the boy to him.

"Come here, my lad," said he; and as the boy approached, "What is your name?" he asked.

"Midzu-hara, may it please your honorable lordship," answered the boy, perceiving at once who it was that addressed him.

"Do you belong to my household?"

"My stepfather, your honorable lordship, is Mata, your lordship's captain of samurai," replied Midzu-hara.

"How came you, then, into my private grounds when your bounds should be the nagaya?" asked the marquis.

"I was flying my kite there when the young lady called me to help her," explained the boy, "and when I saw that it was a 'Foreign' boat that she wanted me to get, I became so interested in saving it that I forgot all else."

He looked up into the marquis' face as he spoke, with clear, honest eyes that impressed Lord Yo-Akè favorably. Just then Aysia, who had been an interested listener, ran up to Midzu-hara impulsively, and placed her boat in his hands.

"If you like the boats of the 'Foreigner'," said she, "you may have mine."

"You are more than kind, mistress," replied the lad, "but it would be a sorry thing that I should be the means of depriving you of the plaything I have recovered for you."

The manner of the refusal pleased Lord Yo-Akè still further. It argued that the lad had right instincts, and knew how to display them tactfully.

"Take it, my lad," said he; "my granddaughter shall not be the loser by her generosity. You may come to this pond to sail it as often as you wish.

Young Midzu-hara accepted the boat with a wildly-beating heart, and, saluting the two gentlemen and Aysia, departed toward the magaya, his precious prize hugged closely in his arms.

Tokiyori turned to his father, smiling.

"You seem interested in the lad, father," he observed.

"Unless I am very mistaken in my estimate," answered his father quietly, "we shall all have cause to be interested in him some day. It may be," he added, half to himself, "that his stepfather would permit that he study nautical affairs abroad. If so, I will afford him the opportunity."

Count Tokiyori patted his daughter's head.

"You are a considerate little girl, Aysia," said he. "You shall have a beautiful new boat to replace the one you have given away, and, if you wish to, father will take you and mother to the booths at Mukojima this afternoon."

Aysia clapped her hands delightedly at this news, and Tokiyori turned to his father.

"I will take your suggestion up with the diet at once, father," said he. "But, as I have said, I doubt the popularity of its reception by that body, and certainly by the intending student emigrants."

He bade his father good morning, and the marquis, re-entering his yashiki, was just in time to greet Goto, who had that moment arrived.

The latter, as soon as he perceived his host, crossed the room to him, consternation depicted on his usually jovial countenance. "'After the moon fulls it lessens!'" he vociferated, excitedly. "The 'Foreign' ship which, on your advice, I purchased, has blown its honorable insides out, and I have lost all my remaining kokus!"

II

THE PLAYER AND THE BALL

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—He *knows—HE knows!*—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE marquis motioned his guest to a seat, taking another near him, and nodded gravely.

"That is a regrettable disaster," he said consolingly. "Still, there are more fish in the sea than ever came out of it. Patience, baron, fortune must smile."

Goto shook his head, dolefully.

"'Awaiting fortune is like awaiting death'," he replied. "I had instructed the ruffian who attends to the wheels and things which my ship has blown into the sea not to sail her over the kelp, because of the eels therein. 'Music to a cow, while it hears the sound, conveys no meaning to its ears.' The villain disobeyed me."

Recently the marquis had persuaded Goto, among others of his acquaintance, to invest in a ship, believing that if Japan was to become a sea power she must acquire the tools necessary to the learning of her trade.

"Possibly it was not wholly the engineer's fault," observed the marquis drily. He was quite aware that certain American and European firms were unloading obsolete hulks upon the "Nation of Little Children," although he still encouraged his friends to buy these as a quick means of acquiring knowledge concerning them.

"Perhaps you are right there," rejoined Goto. "The 'Foreigner' who sold my ship to me is undoubtedly a conscienceless scoundrel. At the time of my making the purchase he told me that she was so strong that if, by mischance, she should strike against a rock, she would split it in twain. While in reality she was so rotten that she fell to pieces in the soft kelp. I am minded to bid a servant of mine disembowel himself upon the threshold of the knave's house."

The marquis repressed a smile. It seemed to him almost pitifully ludicrous to listen to this most modern attired gentleman turning so readily to the methods that prevailed when kimonos and the two swords were the fashion. Then he sighed a little as he realized what a long and weary march his people still were from the City of Desire—that Dai Nippon for which we toiled and spun.

"Nay, nay, baron," he reasoned, almost as one might seek to dissuade a child, "that would have answered well enough in the old days. There is now a better method of revenge than that."

"I would that you would show it me then," responded Goto, gloomily.

"Buy another ship," suggested the marquis, quietly.

"Buy another ship!" exclaimed Goto, his eyes starting nearly out of his head.

"The more ships," explained the marquis, serenely, "the more knowledge of what ships can do."

Goto expressed himself as doubtful as to whether he desired to learn anything further concerning the pranks of such diabolical contrivances, but the marquis continued:

"By knowledge of them you may equal the 'Foreigner' at his own game."

"But if we keep on buying ships so old that they burst their insides, these 'Foreigners' will think us fools—babes—imbeciles!" objected Goto, excitedly.

"It is to be sincerely hoped so," answered Lord Yo-Akè, "for in order to sell us more they will then be inclined to teach us more about them, while we shall have the better opportunity to study and learn, unsuspected. Be guided, baron, and buy another ship."

"'With too many ships the land would be all water'," quoted Goto, doubtfully. "What do we want with all these ships, Yo-Akè? I think the country has gone mad, for everywhere is but talk of ships, ships, ships, when even now are half our people ruined with those they have already purchased. My curses on the man who first invented ships."

Still, so long as they are a necessity to great nations," counseled the marquis, "it behooves us to learn all that is possible concerning their uses. Should, for instance, a war ever occur between us and any other country, it will be fought on ships as well as on land. Thus, even if we half ruin ourselves now in the purchasing of these disused hulks, we still *must* have them to learn with. A fencing stick for the novice—a blade of the finest steel for the master swordsman. The babe must learn to crawl before it toddles, and toddle before it walks firmly—nor do the parents notice how rapidly it is passing from one stage to the other."

Goto pondered over this a moment, and ended as usual by accepting the advice of his friend, of the soundness of which a long-time habit of acting upon had convinced him.

"As to what you say regarding the advisability of national ownership of boats by us, Yo-Akè," he admitted, "perhaps you are

right. Yet, in the matter of my own further investing in such, I fear it will be an impossibility for some time to come."

He drew from the breast pocket of his coat a wallet, from which he solemnly extracted an envelope, handing its contents to the marquis.

"'A cold hearth is no detraction to beggars'," concluded Goto with a whimsical dolefulness. "No sooner did I receive news of my ship blowing up than I got this."

The marquis took the extended letter and read:

"San Francisco, California, U. S. A.

"To the Hon. Baron Goto,
"Tokio, Japan.

"My dear Uncle: I am writing to advise you that it has become necessary for me to draw upon you through the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank for yen five thousand.

"I venture to hope that the fact of my not requesting any remittances from you during the four years of my residence here, coupled with the following reasons, will induce you to take up this draft upon its presentation.

"If you will recall to your honorable memory, at the time of my leaving Nippon I was furnished with a first-cabin passage to America, and yen one thousand toward the defraying of further expenses. These latter being much more excessive here than in Japan, I was soon forced to accept work of a menial sort in order to maintain myself, whereby I was enabled to gain a knowledge of the people, language and customs, both of the social and business life of the country, sooner than might otherwise have been the case. I mention this in order to convince you that my estimate of what follows is based on accurate knowledge and sound judgment so acquired. Having attained a use of the language of the country, I cast about for some medium through which to embark in business for myself, an opportunity to do which has just presented itself.

"Briefly, certain of the great railways here are materially increasing their activities and scope, necessitating a corresponding increase in the numbers of laborers employed by them. In the fact that these need not be skilled mechanics I perceived my chance to

exploit our own laboring class profitably. Acting upon this determination, I have already contracted with certain of these railways' managerial sources to supply them Japanese labor at yen two per day, per head. As this scale of wage will be so greatly in excess of what our laborers can achieve at home, there should be not the slightest difficulty in inducing a great number to accept this offer through me.

"In the light of this, it will be necessary that I return to my country shortly, and I shall, I have no doubt, be enabled easily to repay you the amount of this draft before the year is out. Trusting this will find you enjoying the best of health and prosperity, dear uncle, I am,

"Your dutiful nephew,

"TARO GOTO."

"'The hungry ox will seek its own stall first'," observed Goto as Lord Yo-Akè, having concluded the perusal of this epistle, returned it to him. "The amount of this draft is inconvenient, and the moment of its presentation still more unpropitious. Still, I auger that the boy will do well in this venture."

Lord Yo-Akè assented quietly, his mind reverting to what he knew of Goto's nephew, in the hopes of finding some vulnerable spot by which this enterprise might be presented at its inception, for he saw that the success of Taro's scheme might upset all his future plans for the welfare of the country! Taro did not suggest to his mind the memory of one who would be likely to conceive a venture of such magnitude and undoubted success, unless some very startling change had come over him within the past four years of absence. In this Lord Yo-Akè was influenced by what he had formerly known of Taro, through his own efforts to assist the lad for the baron's sake. At that time Goto had had recourse to Lord Yo-Akè in order to get Taro into some one of the government departments, and through the influence of the marquis had eventually succeeded in installing his nephew in a desk position, carrying with it the highly important and onerous task of recording names, dates and addresses of senders of all public documents received by his department.

Taro prepared to discharge his new duties by passing long periods of the department's time in a contemplation of its ceiling, with the result that at the end of his first term of service it required the careful and laborious drawing of a horoscope about his notations by his fellow clerks to discover which was which. An intricate knowledge of mural decorations not being conceived by those practical and prosaic souls who conducted his department as necessary to the fulfillment of his duties, Taro had been relieved from further service to it, and the baron—on the advice of Marquis Yo-Akè—had finally sent him to America.

Recalling this, Lord Yo-Akè reluctantly admitted to himself that Taro had now stumbled—so he designated Taro's business acumen—upon a scheme for exploiting his countrymen, which, while it might be profitable to himself, Lord Yo-Akè feared would result in untold danger to Nippon. To his way of viewing the matter, while it was desirable that the student and merchant should be encouraged to emigrate for the purposes of study and acquisition, it was imperative that the producer—the backbone of the nation, as he considered him—should be kept at home.

"It seems a promising venture for your nephew, if one may be permitted to pass a hasty judgment upon cursory information," observed the marquis to the baron, finally, in reference to Taro's letter. "Of course, there is always the danger to be reckoned with —as in the case of your ship, Goto—that the 'Foreigners,' who have not always been absolutely honorable in their dealings with us, may not now fulfill their promises to your nephew."

Lord Yo-Akè was feeling about for some means to forestall Taro from receiving the remittance necessary to the founding of this venture.

Goto leaned toward the marquis, impressively.

"That boy of mine is undoubtedly very clever, Yo-Akè," he observed in low tones. "He can secure all the laborers he desires for yen 10 a month."

"He could scarcely be otherwise, considering the fact that he is his uncle's nephew," responded the marquis with flattering unction. "Yet there are so many disadvantages offered oriental enterprise in the occident, I understand, that it seems to me it would

be wiser your nephew should come home to discuss this subject with you before making payment upon this draft he has drawn upon you."

"That," explained Goto, rising to take his leave, "was attended to yesterday morning. I could not leave the lad in doubt as to my intentions to aid him when necessary, Yo-Akè, nor inconvenience him by delay."

Goto left shortly after, declining his host's invitation to stay and partake of a light luncheon on the grounds of urgent public business, and after his departure Lord Yo-Akè fell into a musing strain.

"The loss of our labor just now would paralyze our productive energies," he argued to himself, "yet the same ends may be attained as regards Taro's enterprise by issuing passports to our student class in which they shall be designated laborers. Judging from this young man's own experience, the opportunity in that way afforded them to learn will be greater, and they will become self-supporting from the outset, while we shall be enabled to keep our laborers where they are most needed, and will be indispensable in the years to come—at home."

III

THE LION IN THE COURTS OF THE LIZARD

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

O, RAVISHMENTS of maiden spring, when every bright-garbed bush within your courts stretches forth pliant arms of welcome; when every flower is but a parting lip; when fluttering clouds of unsoiled petal-snow are showered from the cherry trees of Mukojima, to cling in drifts along the banks, or hide in fallen masses

the waters of the dark Sumida, whose gentle eddies abstain from touching with wet tongues their loveliness! What wonder that all, from far and near, come to view its beauty!

Like a gathering of newly-plumed birds the Tokyoites fluttered from tea-booth to toy-stall, twittering their joy of the spring and cherry trees, as Lord Saito of Satsuma strolled along the avenue the early afternoon of the same day when Goto had paid his call to his old friend, the Marquis Yo-Akè. Yet, unlike the majority of the pleasure seekers, Lord Saito glanced with but indifferent eye upon the surrounding sights, until he chanced to see an acquaintance of other days soliciting the patronage of passers-by to one of the several places of amusement. Then he frowned, for although it no longer astonished him to come suddenly upon old-time friends of the fudai daimio performing menial offices, it galled him, and he never lost opportunity to address such ostentatiously, as though to impress upon the chance observer that neither restoration nor "Foreign" ways could in his estimation alter the status of a born gentleman. Needless to state, he attributed the present disagreeable conditions—as he considered them—entirely to "Foreign" influence in Nippon, and the protection extended that body by the Yo-Akè. In accordance with his usual practice, he now made his way across the avenue with the intention of exchanging a few words with the theatre attendant in whom he had recognized a former equal.

"I give you good day, Ikeda," said he. "It is some years since we have met."

Ikeda—once Lord Saburo Ikeda, of the Shogun's Baka-fu, the accredited chargeé of the safety of "Foreign" embassies in Yedo —returned the greeting with reserve. His position of nakauri or yosè refreshment vender was not such that he cared to advertise its present tenant as formerly a daimio, nor had he, despite the several years of service at this occupation, become so accustomed to his changed fortunes that he could greet old acquaintances without inward feelings of humiliation.

"It is not likely that we should see one another often," he replied to Saito's greeting, "for our lives and conditions have become widely separated since this topsy-turveydom of all things, known, I understand, as Meiji."

"You have at least the one consolation of having many others to share equal misfortunes with you," remarked Saito, "while, in my case, I stand practically alone in my life and views. I recall that it was but the other day I chanced to meet a one-time acquaintance drawing a 'ricksha for some 'Foreign' parvenu."

"A small consolation," rejoined Ikeda, whilst bowing to an entering patron. "But in what do you stand alone?"

"Apparently in my distrust of the 'Barbarian'," returned Saito. "To judge by the actions of our countrymen of today, one would believe the 'Foreigner' an absolute god. Our people imitate his every thought and action, and live but according to his diction—even you rub shoulders with him daily, while Goto has fairly smothered his own nationality beneath 'Foreign' clothes, and now struts forth as vain and pompous as a brainless peacock. But as for me, rather than welcome the despoiler of my country, the traducer of her honor, and the desecrator of her gods, I have severed all connection with the present government, retiring permanently to my native Satsuma. There, joined by a few of our old kind, Ikeda, who still hold their honor before their pockets, I have founded a school for the training of samurai, for which I have but now journeyed to Tokyo to purchase armor and swords."

"Both swords and armor are cheap enough today," commented Ikeda. "Indeed it was but this very morn that an old friend—once a daimio of the east provinces—offered me his Muramasa blade for two bu. I learned that he sold it shortly after to a relic-hunting 'Foreigner' for thrice that amount."

"Steel forged by Nippon's greatest master sold to some coarse tradesman for the price of a harlot's love!" exclaimed Saito bitterly. "No wonder that where once the wearers of those mighty blades trod proudly, commerce now stalks in loud-mouthed insosolence!"

He felt by his side as though there to find the familiar hilts of his own swords, forgetting for the moment that these had been discarded because of the governmental order against their use.

"My blades, as well," said he, "were forged by Muramasa, in blood and fire, and my fathers wore them before me for Satsuma and for Nippon. They were never drawn but in knightly honor,

and may my right hand rot and wither on its arm if any 'Foreigner' feels aught of them excepting the keenness of their edge."

"That is all very well for you to say," rejoined Ikeda, "for you still have your fat rent rolls, and are not forced to soil your hands with menial tasks as am I and others."

"Yet would I rather become a tiller of the fields the balance of my years," retorted Saito, "than lower my honor and desecrate the memory of my fathers, as has your friend his. If you so dislike your occupation here why do you continue it?"

Ikeda stared at him a moment in uncertainty, as though half hoping Saito might intend to make him some other offer, and then, perceiving that such was not the case and that Saito spoke merely from an ignorance of the vicissitudes of utter poverty, burst out with,

"Fiends of hell, Saito! Do you suppose I thus demean myself for sport? I tell you not in all the history of my house has such a wrong gone unavenged! Here stand I, Saburo Ikeda, a noble of Nippon and counselor to the Shogun, penniless, a menial. I tell you, Saito, life holds not a sister misery to that encompassed by the scroll of an emptied title. By the Jurojin! I'd rather have been born my yosè landlord here in Mukojima, than Saburo Ikeda gilt in his armorial bearings without the wherewithal to pittance him a meal!"

He broke off abruptly, and clutching Saito wildly by the sleeve of his kimono, pointed to a small party of passers-by across the avenue from where he and Saito stood.

"Look! look!" he whispered in excited accents. "There goes he who has brought all this woe upon us!"

Saito, glancing in the direction indicated by Ikeda, perceived Tokiyori Yo-Akè walking with his unmistakable slight limp—the result of the wound he had received on the night of the attack upon the "Foreign" embassies seven years before—beside another gentleman whom he recognized as Lord (now Viscount) Sakurai of Niijima. Behind them, holding a little girl by the hand, stepped with pretty demureness one the sight of whom started his heart beating wildly—Kiku-ko, born Shimadzu. An instant he followed the outlines of her figure beneath the sunshade she held, then as

the party came abreast of the yosè, quickly shrank within, drawing Ikeda after him.

"You do not love this Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè," he remarked, eyeing Ikeda keenly.

"Love him!" burst out Ikeda, intensely. "Aye, I love him so well that I pray mine gods each night of my life to consume him and his brood—lecherous spawn of vipers! Count! Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè—and his father the most noble marquis. By my faith, Saito, kami and sama were noble enough in *our* times! Yet, now it seems that one must be labeled as count, marquis, baron or viscount before one is reckoned as of honorable blood. On my honor, Saito, I swear to you that so little reverence have I for the wearers of these new titles, and that 'Foreign' fox, Tokiyori Yo-Akè, who creates them, that I pray daily that whatever of success should follow his life may be accredited to others, but that his failures may be so many, and so indelibly stamped on his own record, that when his time is come he shall descend unto his grave unhonored and unwept."

In his hatred of the man he so stigmatized, he stepped forth from his shelter, shaking his clenched fist at the retreating figures. Saito also emerged, and prepared to continue his stroll along the Cherry Avenue.

"Who knows?" said he, thoughtfully. "The pestle crushes slowly, but it grinds the bean to finest powder. Sayonara, Ikeda."

IV

A SORRY TRADE

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

AFTER Saito's departure, Ikeda still stood without the yosè entrance, immersed in retrospective thought. He was possessed of a naturally intriguing turn of mind, and the words spoken by his companion of the moment since had set his brain actively dredging in channels whose depths had for the past few years become

obscured in the mire of his degradation. Plainly, he perceived, or thought he perceived, a means to attaining the restoration of his forfeited rank and estates by the overthrow of the present governmental system. His own present unpalatable position he regarded as the depths of injustice, having at the time of the Mikado's assumption of actual sovereignty in the first year of Meiji (1868) sought to attach himself to the government, and being prevented from becoming a member of it by the emphatic negative of Asano Yo-Akè, who—for the moment during which the future of Nippon hung in the scales between a virtual Shogunate and real empire—had stepped into the breach as an all-powerful dictator. Now, although Lord Yo-Akè had retired from outward political duties as soon as he had firmly established the Mikado in Tokyo, his tenets were being carried out almost identically by his material successors, so that Saburo Ikeda found the ears of these no more open to his plaints than had been those of Lord Yo-Akè. Perforce, as a maintenance for his growing daughter and himself, he had installed himself in his present position at Mukojima; yet, he had never ceased to dream and plan of the possibility of some day reverting to his former status.

It occurred to him now that an opportunity was unfolding toward this desired consummation, could he but grasp it. Saito was disgruntled with the present government, as was shown by his withdrawal from participation in any of its affairs. He might, Ikeda argued, be prevailed upon to lead a revolutionary movement against the diet under certain conditions, in which event he would be already partly equipped by virtue of his well-attended school for samurai at Satsuma. This, Ikeda calculated roughly, would furnish as it now stood possibly some five hundred trained and tried men-at-arms for the nucleus of a contemplated revolt, moreover it was beyond mere supposition that Saito's immense popularity with the old samurai and the populace would, at the first hint that he proposed placing himself at the head of a body of men for the restoration of old Nippon, treble his ranks in less than no time. On that issue Ikeda felt there need be no apprehension, but he was not so sanguine as to presuppose that the ultimate successful outcome of so great and far-reaching a signifi-

cance could be accomplished by the personal efforts of a few thousand fighting men and the acclaims of an easily swayed populace. Saga had tried conclusions with the government on that same reasoning some two years before, failing most disastrously. Ikeda believed he could put his finger on the exact weak spot in the armor of Saga's rebellion—its absolute confinement to a single locality of interest and action. That is, Saga had failed because he represented the interests of but one class of the people as against the interests of the whole country, a handicap Ikeda determined to avoid at the outset should he be successful in inducing Saito to espouse a cause of his.

He planned for, now that it was necessary his contemplated movement should embrace what it stood for, all conditions of old Nippon. Undoubtedly, he argued, there were many with interests now bound up in certain of the empire's developing industries who might be brought to aid him through their still predominant reverence for that Nippon of the Shogunate days, and could these but be discovered and secured toward his revolt, it would be a long step toward its successful climax. But, most of all, he counted on the adherents of former Tokugawa partisans who, like himself, were now in reduced circumstances. The prestige and family connections of such would be incalculably far reaching, undermining even many of the present diet's offices. This honeycombing of the empire was, Ikeda saw, the needed factor to his ultimate success, and must be accomplished before it would be practical to proclaim a state of arms against this new order of things.

Resolved upon this, he now bethought him of ways and means toward its fulfillment. It was one thing to plan a gathering of malcontents, and quite another to bring it to an actuality. As a first step toward the latter, money was essential, and this he lacked. With money he could approach former acquaintances with a view to enlisting their sympathies and co-operation, and be enabled to conduct meetings in places where good food, wine and privacy—indispensable adjuncts—would be procurable, which, alas! his own meager establishment, that barely sufficed for the support of his daughter and himself, could not provide. His credit was worthless, his prospects nil, his few remaining friends as bankrupt as himself. Where and how then to obtain money?

Pondering, he glanced abstractedly across the avenue, where he chanced to perceive and recognize one familiar to him in bygone days—Tanaka san, proprietor of the houses known as The Jewel River in the Yoshiwara, or "Flower Quarter," of Tokyo. Ikeda recalled, idly, that this person had once been wont to lend sums of money to his temporarily embarrassed patrons, at usurious rates of interest it was true, but money nevertheless. Aforetime, he had himself had recourse to this Tanaka, and from the fact that he had in those days promptly discharged such indebtedness he suddenly conceived that it might be barely possible he could again approach him successfully on such a topic. In any event Tanaka seemed the sole source likely to entertain a proposal to make him a loan, and with this thought in mind, Ikeda stepped forth from the yosè entrance into the passing throng of sight-seers, gesticulating to attract the vanishing Tanaka's attention. Eventually this individual, perceiving that some one was trying to attract his attention with the evident desire of speech, crossed over toward the yosè.

As Tanaka approached him, Ikeda noted that he preserved the same sleek, smooth appearance as of yore, and then, when he was within easy speaking distance, plunged into his subject without reserve.

"You recall me, Tanaka?" he asked. "Saburo Ikeda—Lord Ikeda, you know, of the Shogun's Baka-fu? Step within this yosè; I have a word for your private ear."

Tanaka accompanied him as requested, and when they had found a quiet place—for the afternoon was waning and attendance at the yosè had somewhat fallen off—prepared to listen to what disclosures his companion had in store for him.

"I presume," began Ikeda, "that you still control your houses, The Jewel River?"

Tanaka admitted the truth of this surmise, adding:

"Business is improving since the advent of the 'Foreigner'; yet I lost so much in loans to the nobles of the Shogun's court at the time of the Restoration that it will be long, I fear, before I recover from those bad debts."

"Then," said Ikeda, "you would not be averse to seeing your debtors in a position in which they would be able to repay you?"

"Naturally not," answered Tanaka, slightly surprised.

"Even if it required a small outlay on your part to bring such a state of affairs about?" continued Ikeda.

"If it might be done securely," assented Tanaka, cautiously, now both suspicious and wary of Ikeda's intentions. He had a premonition of what was coming and did not favor Saburo Ikeda as a desirable investment.

Ikeda leaned impressively toward him.

"Tanaka," said he, in low, eager tones, "I want you to lend me a thousand yen."

Tanaka spread his hands out, deprecatingly.

"A thousand yen!" he exclaimed. "By the gods, I do not own such a sum! You might better ask that I give you my houses of The Jewel River, incumbrances, good-will and all."

"If you have it not, you can procure it easily," argued Ikeda, ignoring the money-lender's incredulity, "and its loan now will return you its weight multiplied thrice."

"In how long?" asked Tanaka.

"One year from the date of its receipt," assured Ikeda.

Tanaka pondered.

"There would have to be excellent security," he cautioned.

"There is," answered Ikeda.

"What?"

"My word."

"Not negotiable," was Tanaka's imperturable answer.

Ikeda pretended to grow angry.

"Do you refuse the word of a gentleman?" he asked, with something of his old manner.

"I prefer his seals upon other securities when loaning him my money," replied Tanaka, unmoved. "I have the words of many noble gentlemen now in return for my monies, yet they still remain my debtors."

Ikeda tried other tactics.

"If you will but lend me this paltry sum I will soon place many of your debtors in a position from which they will be able to repay you principal and interest," he insisted in low tones. "Listen, Tanaka. Your loan can not be otherwise than safe with me. There

are many coming changes—changes of which you know nothing. I shall soon be in a position worthy of my name, I tell you. You may find it greatly to your advantage to have a friend in Saburo Ikeda shortly."

Tanaka shrugged his shoulders incredulously.

"I do not see any signs of the many changes at which you hint," said he; "nor any possibility of your fortunes becoming altered for the better."

Ikeda, fearful of losing this sole opportunity of securing the coveted loan, became slightly incautious.

"That is because you do not know," he replied. "The whole country is aroused against the pro-'Foreign' policy of the government. That government, Tanaka, can not much longer stand upon its false foundations, and it dare not change its attitude now for fear of retaliation. Men may call it what they please, but in reality it is but a Yo-Akè government, given by the father, carried out by the son. Do you suppose Nippon will long permit a continuance of such things? I know, Tanaka, I know! Am I not of those from whom the natural advisory rulers of the country are drawn? Have you not heard that Lord Saito has founded a school for samurai at Satsuma?"

"So that is where Lord Saito disappeared to," mused Tanaka, thinking deeply. His profession required that he should keep abreast of the times, both politically and socially.

"Disappeared!" exclaimed Ikeda, scornfully. "Your knowledge of things is sadly lacking, Tanaka. Saito is in Tokyo now, and was conversing with me but a short half hour ago on subjects that might surprise you."

"I might be inclined to consider such a loan provided I knew something of the purpose for which it was intended," said Tanaka at last, in the tones of one who was becoming slowly convinced, "although the gods alone know where I could procure the sum you mention."

"Furies of hell, man!" broke out Ikeda. "Have I not told enough already?"

Tanaka fixed Ikeda with a pair of relentless eyes.

"Yes, you have," said he, "told me sufficient to show me that you

and Lord Saito are planning a repetition of the Saga revolt, and that you require a thousand yen to join yourself with it.

"You have no right to jump to such a hasty conclusion," objected Ikeda, now frightened at what he had said to Tanaka.

"I would be but a fool could I not see that which is so apparent," retorted Tanaka. "As to the loan, I am an honest subject of the Mikado and see no reason why I should help his evident enemies."

A cold perspiration broke out on Ikeda's brow as he realized the import of Tanaka's words, and how completely the latter had him in his power. What disavowal he might have attempted or what further Tanaka might have threatened remained unknown, for an interruption occurred just then in the person of a girl—or rather young woman—of such exceeding and dainty beauty as to distract Tanaka's attention momentarily. She approached the two, and bowing to Ikeda, indicated an overcoat she bore on her arm.

"I have brought your howari, father, against the chill of the evening," said she. "Shall you be home in time for an early supper?"

She extended her arm holding the overcoat as she spoke, and Tanaka noted with admiration the perfect symmetry of wrist and hand.

Ikeda nodded absently to his daughter's query.

"Shortly, shortly, Ren-ko," said he.

"Then I will retire to prepare it," she answered, and, bowing to her father without paying any attention to his companion, withdrew.

Tanaka prepared to renew the conversation.

"Your daughter?" he asked of Ikeda, still watching the gracefully retreating form of the girl.

Again Ikeda nodded. He was too sunk in a troubled mind to give thought to such topics; moreover he would not in any case have discussed a lady of his household with one of Tanaka's caste.

"She is beautifully perfect," continued Tanaka, still watching her; "extraordinarily so!"

He remained, his head still strained to catch the last of her vanishing figure, until she had passed outside the yosè entrance, then turned suddenly to Ikeda.

"I will loan you that one thousand yen, Ikeda," said he, "upon one condition—"

Ikeda glanced up, his heart palpitating with sudden fear and hope.

"That you give your daughter into my keeping as your security," concluded Tanaka.

V

ON THE ROLL OF FATE

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

FOR a moment Ikeda stared at Tanaka in sheer amazement, then, as the interpretation of the latter's meaning formed in his mind, he sprang to his feet, his face fairly livid at the insult offered his family.

"You vile harlot-huckster!" he broke forth. "You low—"

"Not so loud," reminded Tanaka, quietly yet menacingly. "Others might chance to overhear you, when certain unfortunate explanations would become necessary."

The realization of Tanaka's recently acquired power over him sobered Ikeda, and he relapsed into a sullen, angry silence.

"This is my proposal," continued Tanaka, "which you may, of course, reject if you deem such a course *advisable*. How old is your daughter?"

Ikeda comprehended Tanaka's hidden threat in the slight accenting of the word "advisable."

"Seventeen," he growled.

"A very good age," responded Tanaka. "If I loan you this yen one thousand it must be upon some more stable security than your personal ambitions. Your daughter is acceptable to me as such—nay," he continued as Ikeda made as if to interrupt, "hear me out before you decide. Can she perform on samisen and koto?"

Ikeda nodded.

"Do you not know that noble ladies are taught such accomplishments?" said he.

"Yet there is a difference between the superficial accomplishments of noble ladies and the work of real artists," dissented Tanaka. "However, if not already proficient your daughter will—or I am making my first mis-guess at such—acquire the art in little or no time. I propose that she be installed at the Jewel River as a geisha for the space of one year. I will lend you now this yen one thousand upon your written agreement to repay me yen three thousand at the end of that time, during which your daughter shall be your hostage; but if you fail to liquidate the indebtedness in full at the end of the stipulated year, she is to belong absolutely to me until she, by her own efforts, repays the whole amount. Do you agree?"

Ikeda, who had been thinking hard during Tanaka's expounding of his proposal, came to the conclusion that such an arrangement would benefit him greatly. Moreover, he was of a sanguine temperament, and did not believe in the possibility of failure to his scheme.

"There is one proviso that would first have to be considered,"

said he. "It will be necessary that I have at my disposal, always, one room in the Jewel River."

Tanaka reflected a moment. He perceived at once that such a privilege extended Ikeda would redound to the financial benefit of the Jewel River, because the bulk of the yen one thousand would find its way back into his own pockets through the medium of the profits on his *sakè,* food, and the like, yet hesitated on account of the danger of furnishing a place of meeting to a conspiracy.

"If you choose to occupy a room in my house," said he finally and non-committally, "that is no affair of mine, and the private arrangements between ourselves regarding such a privilege will be no affair of others. But it must be understood that in all respects your position in my house is the same as that of any other visitor—your privacy as inviolate. I am not supposed to concern myself with what my guests permit within rooms hired by them—unless I chance to know such to be against the law and order of the country."

"With the acceptance of that proviso, then, I agree to your proposal," assented Ikeda.

Tanaka arose, prepared to bring the conversation to a close.

"I will proceed to the 'Flower Quarter' for the necessary papers and the money," said he. "When and where can we complete this transaction?"

"My duties end here at sundown for a short space," suggested Ikeda. "Why not return here for me at that hour, when we can adjourn to my home for a bite and sup, and there arrange all final details?"

"That will suit me excellently," agreed Tanaka. "At sundown then I will be awaiting you without. Sayonara till then."

After bidding farewell to Ikeda, Saito had wandered about the city for some time, now passing old acquaintances, now pausing to view once familiar scenes, until, the afternoon far spent, he determined to indulge the craving he felt to talk with Kiku-ko once again. In reality there was no reason why he should have hesitated to call at Tokiyori's besso, for although he and Kiku-ko's husband were the antithesis of one another politically, they

were still socially upon terms of apparent amity, and as Kiku-ko's kinsman he was assured of a welcome.

As he had anticipated, he found Kiku-ko alone at the villa, she having returned thither from Mukojima with Aysia, leaving Tokiyori to accompany Lord Sakurai first to Niijima, and afterwards to continue on to his offices in the diet chambers. His meeting with Kiku-ko was somewhat constrained at first, for neither had seen much of one another since the afternoon of his serenade beneath the balcony of the besso, attired as a minstrel, and that same night when he had led his samurai in an attack on what he supposed was the house of a traitor. After the first few questions about members of the Satsuma family and affairs in the south, their conversation drifted into more personal channels, Kiku-ko asking him what he intended doing now that he had retired from any active part in public affairs.

"Nothing, as regards further service to the government," Saito replied in answer to her question. "My heart is sickened when I look upon our sacred city and note that here, in its greatest temple, *our* Japan is fast becoming but a memory. I shall reside permanently in Satsuma, where—as yet— no 'Foreign' impurities have invaded."

"Aysia and I are leaving Tokio shortly for Moto," continued Kiku-ko. "We expect to be there the greater part of the hot summer months. The marquis has grown very attached to Aysia, and rarely visits Biwa-ko without taking us with him. As Moto is so much nearer Satsuma than is Tokyo, perhaps we shall be favored with an occasional visit from you there, Saito san."

Saito shook his head, sadly.

"I think not," said he. "I dare say Lord Yo-Akè would make me welcome enough, but I could not bear to look upon Moto, and *our* bower again, Kiku-ko. I have no doubt it will be soon in the full beauty of its wistaria blooms, but I have no desire to hear possible 'Foreign' visitors to the castle defiling its music with their hoarse, coarse speech—bawling in their ill breeding where once your samisen did sing. It would paint for me too vividly all that I have lost, the bitter failure of the hopes and visions I then had for our future, and our country."

He relapsed into silence, while Kiku-ko felt a moisture dimming her eyes as she thought of that one perfect evening with him in the bower.

"Our Nippon has gone from us," continued Saito, after a few moments, "back into the land of art-shadows and mists from whence it came. Its winter snows are broken and soiled now with the trampling of foreign feet, and of its summers, all, excepting their sun, is set. Nippon is dead, leaving a few of us who loved it to mingle our tears over its almost forgotten grave. I mourn for that which was, and loath this which is, Kiku-ko—this Japan to which I belong not at all, and which has no welcome for such as I. Thus, it seems to me, that my life here is now purposeless, and that I should be far happier awaiting you in the Meido-Land—Lady of my heart."

Her tears were falling now, for as the daughter of a samurai she knew full well that he hinted at taking his own life. He sought her hand, and finding it, pressed it tenderly to his cheeks, yet with a reverence that removed somehow any insult to her, a wife.

"Oh, do not think and say such things, Saito san!" she plead, finding her voice at last. "You are great and strong, and I know the gods place not such in this world without giving to them a mission."

"My mission died when Nippon closed her flowers o'er her eyes," he answered.

"Yet she left you to guard and care for her children," replied Kiku-ko, quickly. "She counted on such as you to cherish the babes of her heart whom she loved. Will you fail her? Our people reverence you and look to you for aid and protection."

"Only when they are in the extremes of danger," he replied, moodily. "The men of Nippon are now too busy in their endeavors to resemble the 'Barbarian' to pay heed to such out-of-fashion persons as myself."

"But not her daughters," rejoined Kiku-ko. "They need the protection of just such nobles as yourself—my knight."

He shook his head, still unconvinced.

"Will you not live for them?" she continued, softly.

"If *you* wish it," said he.

"I do—with all my heart and soul!"

"So be it, then," he promised. "From henceforth I live to guard and aid the women of my land."

A little burst of shrill laughter interrupted them, followed by cries of "Kiri! kiri! hyaku—hyaku!" Kiku-ko slid the shoji that gave out on the garden, disclosing to them Aysia, who, a flower wand in hand, was chasing a group of lavender-and-gold butterflies about the compound. At sight of her mother's visitor she assumed a shy air of demureness and entered through the opening to be presented to him."

"This is your cousin, the famous Lord Saito of Satsuma, dear," explained Kiku-ko to her daughter.

Aysia made the quaintest little bow imaginable, and Saito patted her head.

"Had I known what a pretty little cousin I possessed," said he, "I would not have paid this visit empty-handed of sweetmeats. As it is I must hasten into the city to repair my neglect."

He bowed to his two cousins and quitted the besso by the 'rickscha that awaited him at the gateway. Kiku-ko and Aysia stood at the open shoji watching until the Shiba verdure hid him from sight. Then, with a little sigh, Kiku-ko closed the shoji.

"Is not cousin Saito very handsome, mother?" asked Aysia.

"Yes, Aysia; I think the handsomest and bravest man in the whole of Japan," answered Kiku-ko, unthinkingly.

"No," corrected Aysia, "father is that, you know. But I think that after father and Midzu-hara he is the handsomest and bravest."

"Whom is Midzu-hara, little one?" asked Kiku-ko.

"Oh, a friend of mine," answered Aysia with a deliciously grown-up air.

VI

SAYONARA, OH GARDEN OF MINE!

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter shall she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for ONE *in vain!*—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

SABURO IKEDA'S humble abode did not present many opportunities for extended housekeeping, and limited as Ren-ko was for space and necessities, she was fortunate in being expected to prepare only the simplest of meals. Thus, having cooked the supper rice and set a bottle of cheap sakè by her parent's tray, she with-

drew to her little room whilst awaiting the homecoming of her father.

Yet, if she was unfortunate in the attributes of ordinary life, Ren-ko had one compensation for the unkindness of her fate—the small garden at the rear of the cottage. Here with loving care she grew the seasonal flowers and vines, and sometimes—for the flowers seemed grateful for her understanding of and sympathy with them—little odd, nameless shrubs and plants would peep up from the earth to afford her joy and amusement. As she entered her room she slid the shoji of it, that she might wish her garden an o yasumi nasai.

Dusk was touching the cherry petals of the Mukojima trees with leaden, gray fingers, and through the open window Ren-ko could discern the faint night mist draping gracefully over the petal-strewn waters of the Sumida like the coverlet of a futon, while here and there twinkling lanterns began to gleam along the avenue. Far-away—so it seemed to her—lay the great, sleepless city, with Fuji-no-yama watching over the changing panoramic life, serene in its snow-capped distant height, and over the tree tops, toward this, a silvery light was spreading in the soft, waxlike sky to forerun the stately flight of April's moon.

She stood for a few moments inhaling the beauty of the fading twilight, then turning back into the little room, lit the single andon it contained, and kneeling by the faint glow, proceeded to turn the leaves of a brightly-colored book lent her that day by a neighbor. It portrayed scenes from the various fêtes for which the Yoshiwara was celebrated, among them the great annual procession of its oiiran, spread across the double pages of the book in a pageant of startling color and magnificence. The reproductions were faithful, even to detail, for, despite the richness of the display, the artist had caught and pictured the unearthly nothingness and mechanism in the features of the courtesans, transforming even the gorgeous fulness of their kimonos into a semblance of utter woodenness. With full, crimsoned lips, faces and necks bedaubed with the unnaturalness of dead-white paint and powder, stiff with the embroidered gold and silver of crêpe and silk, apparently seeing, feeling and knowing nothing, passed on the

pages before her, by twos and twos, the endless oiiran, attended each by two small maiden neophytes in their novitiate.

Ren-ko studied the drawings rapturously, until in a childish spirit of play, she commenced unconsciously to pace her tiny apartment in mimicry of the pictured beauties. Left much to her own devices, she had acquired a habit of amusing herself by secret acting, and with the necessity of ever developing this art further to appease the craving of her critical loneliness, had achieved a perfection in it. Up and down her apartment she tripped, raising her feet as though shod with the highest of geta, until, ever and anon resuming her seat by the andon for a fresh study of details, she decided that nothing was lacking in her imitation to make it live, excepting the reality itself—ah, yes; one thing was awry, the oiiran in the pictures wore the bows of their obi knotted in front! Again she studied the reproductions to reassure herself upon this point, and then noting that the same custom prevailed for one and all of the unfortunates in the pictured procession, slipped the bow of her own obi to the front, exactly after the fashion prescribed for the inmates of the "Flower Quarter."

"There!" exclaimed Ren-ko, as she completed her task, "now I am a real oiiran!"

She heard the fusima of the adjoining apartment open, and hastened into the room to serve her father with his evening meal. In the doorway she stopped suddenly, all confused, for she perceived that he had brought to their home a guest—a most unusual occurrence—who was evidently the same with whom she had found him conversing at the yosè earlier in the afternoon.

"Your supper is prepared, father," she faltered. "I was not aware of your intentions to bring an honorable guest with you, and must crave his pardon for so poor a meal."

"It will suffice," answered Ikeda, while Tanaka murmured something about the divineness of the surroundings compensating for any fare, however humble. He was, in truth, although he would not admit such even to himself, a little secretly awed by his sudden close association with his born superiors.

"Bring my ink-case and writing table," continued Ikeda to his daughter, "and then serve supper."

She retired quickly into the privacy of her small room, and after a few seconds devoted to the rearranging of her attire, re-entered the apartment with the ink-case, which, with the table, she placed before her parent; she then set the supper tables, placing her own, with its scanty meal, before the mat of their guest. This done she withdrew to her room, supperless.

Before the window once more she stood, yet now it seemed the beauty of the landscape had become erased by the dark shade that lay over all. Presently this dispelled, and the rim of the rising moon semi-circled the tops of a gathering of trees. Slowly, but invincibly, it rose until its half globe of molten radiance showered a ripe, full light, rich as spilling quicksilver. Then, like an enormous andon in the velvet courts of night, it hung above the Cherry Avenue. It dimmed the lanterns among the trees, and shed its cold, unerring glamor over road and river, creeping in and out among the tree trunks and shadow-blackened booths and yosè like some great occult searchlight, from whose insistence nothing could hide. She noted the still falling clouds of cherry petals, silver flaked by the moon—and suddenly to Ren-ko they seemed as cold as winter snow. Beneath her shoji the little garden lay, frosted in this whiteness, the flowers motionless and lifeless as though of carven ivory. A shadow touched her soul, awful in the perfection of its deathlike nothingness.

Presently she distinguished the voice of her father summoning her to the adjoining apartment, and with a sigh that contained in its notes the loneliness of a last farewell, entered the room where the two men were. Their supper was over; before Ikeda lay a freshly signed and sealed scroll.

"Ren-ko," said he, without lifting his eyes from the scroll, " a change has entered our lives necessitating a removal of abode. In the immediate future my own movements will be to some extent uncertain—unavoidably so. Because of this I have arranged for a temporary asylum for you with this man, Mr. Tanaka. It is my wish that you prepare to accompany him as soon as possible."

He stopped and eyed her anxiously, while Ren-ko strove to recover from the bewilderment of his sudden and unexpected announcement.

"Where is to be my abode, father?" she faltered, finally.

Ikeda cleared his throat, nervously.

"At—that is, I would say I believe this man—Mr. Tanaka's house is called the—The Jewel River," explained Ikeda with obvious confusion.

"The Jewel River?" repeated Ren-ko, still bewildered. "The Jewel River?"

Then a light, as cold and relentless as the moon, dawned on her, nipping, as frost nips flower, the warmth of her maiden innocence. No abodes of her knowing were called by such name as Jewel River, but on the banners borne among the oiiran of her picture book similar unique insignia was frequent. She came a step nearer her father, her lips parted, her eyes staring as though at some startling horror, her little shapely hands clasped over her breasts as though to hold shut the door of its purity—its sanctum—against the vandalism of mankind.

"Am I sold, my father?" she quavered, her mouth drooping piteously.

Ikeda turned his head away, murmuring something about "degraded circumstances" and the "appurtenances of the house of Ikeda," but neither he nor his guest said aught to her. She gazed, as though for some word of comfort, from one to the other, and still they sat immobile—Ikeda through shame, Tanaka because his time was not yet. They seemed to her like two great giant spiders, motionless, relentless, their spinnerets weaving silent webs about their helpless victim. Then—without warning; beyond her powers of suppression—a stifled hysterical scream escaped her, as burying her head within her hands, she sobbed dry, tearless, body racking sobs, that shook her watchers with a creature anguish.

"Oh, sorrow of the gods!" she wailed, "I am to be an oiiran! I am to be an oiiran!"

She reached her room—how she knew not, nor cared—and mechanically made up her belongings into one small bundle. This finished, she started to return to her father and Tanaka—then stopped irresolutely, and stepped back to the open shoji. It was to her garden that she would make her last farewell. There it lay, its flowers perfect in their slumber, the children she had mothered because of her unknown, yet primal, instinct of motherhood

and creation. Her garden slept, the flowers folded on its breasts, and when their eyes would open on the morrow no Ren-ko would tend their fragile petals, no Ren-ko would straighten or bend their delicate stalks. What matter that some other might learn to care for them? They were hers—the children of her soul.

The tears that had not come to ease her own pain, now fell like pearl drops in the moonlight on her garden.

"Sayonara, Oh garden of mine," whispered Ren-ko—the fallen flower; "Sayonara."

VII

THE OLD FAMILIAR JUICE

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion has gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by."—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

DECEMBER of that year brought with it two visitors to Nippon —the seasonal snow and the now occidentalized Taro Goto—the last in quest of Japanese laborers to fulfill his contract. With his advent into Goto's home by the Sumida River, life had taken on the cherriest of aspects to the baron. Taro was his idol, the hope

of his family, and to neither friends nor acquaintances did Gotó ever seem to tire of recounting tales of his nephew's extreme sagacity, and his wonderful insight into "Foreign" life and customs. Hence it befell that before he had been in Tokyo a full fortnight, Mr. Taro Goto had become somewhat of a celebrity, and was spoken of everywhere as a coming young man.

Among others to whom the baron proferred entertainments at his Mukojima besso in honor of his nephew was Tokiyori. Kikuko and Aysia had accompanied the marquis to Biwa-ko about mid-summer, and had not yet returned to the city. With Taro, Tokiyori was from the first favorably impressed, and naturally, for the two had much in common regarding "Foreign" topics. He listened with the utmost interest to Taro's plan concerning the exploitation of labor, and in the end not only agreed to assist his enterprise by the issuance of the necessary passports and the stamp of governmental approval, but suggested to Taro that he form an emigration company, which should also seek to acquire lands for farming purposes in the United States.

Upon this advice Taro set smartly to work, with the result that at the end of a fortnight the Nippon Land and Emigration Company received its birth, with projected offices in Tokyo and San Francisco. Taro interested several men of wealth and prominence in the formation of this company, and had himself elected general manager, with almost limitless discretionary powers. Nor was his uncle, the baron, forgotten in all this good fortune. Thus, while it would have been impracticable for Goto because of his prominent governmental position to become directly connected with a private enterprise, the difficulty was surmounted by his being represented through the medium of a third party. Once more, it seemed, prosperity was about to descend upon the house of Goto.

These details to the launching of the Nippon Land and Emigration Company satisfactorily completed, Taro prepared to give himself up for the few remaining weeks of his stay in Tokyo to the pleasures of the city, and in accordance with this found himself strolling one evening through the "Flower Quarter" of the town, and by chance in front of the two houses of The Jewel River. Entering, he ordered dinner and geisha. Fate ordained that

one of the latter should be Ren-ko, who for some eight months past had been under Tanaka's rule, known by her "house name" as The Breath of Mukojima. At the conclusion of the entertainment, Taro was so well pleased and so profoundly impressed with her that he engaged the same geisha for the following evening.

The eight months subsequent upon her sale had developed Ren-ko from a girl into a woman—an extremely world-wise one. Clever she had always been. In a manner she had become reconciled to the change in her life, taking a positive interest and enjoyment in her share of her father's conspiracy, to which she proved no small accessory by reason of her perfect adaptability to any and all circumstances and the aid of her truly wondrous beauty. The plot was progressing favorably, and Ikeda had succeeded in enrolling Saito among its members—a fact due largely to the latter's interpretation of his promise to Kiku-ko, and a secret hope of overthrowing the Yo-Akè and ultimately winning her.

The following night saw Taro again in The Jewel River, according to his arrangement of the evening before. As he was leaving the house he met Tanaka by chance, and took occasion to compliment him upon the possession of such a charming geisha.

"She is a very remarkable girl," observed Taro.

"She is, indeed, the pride of my poor houses," agreed Tanaka. "When in addition to her accomplishments as a geisha one takes into account the nobility of her birth and breeding, The Jewel River may be pardoned if it feels that it is making every effort to please its customers. We hope for the honor of a visit from you soon again, honorable sir."

"Of noble birth is she?" asked Taro. "Who are her parents?"

"The honorable Saburo Ikeda is her father," explained Tanaka.

"Saburo Ikeda? Not Lord Ikeda, once of the Shogun's Baka-fu?"

"Yes," said Tanaka, "the same."

"Saburo Ikeda!" repeated Taro, half to himself. "I remember him quite well when I was but a boy. How times have changed! Well, sayonara, landlord; your dinner was excellent and your geisha was most charming."

Later that same night Taro took his uncle into his confidence regarding the geisha, Breath of Mukojima.

"I dined at The Jewel River in the Yoshiwara this evening," he observed to Goto, with whom he was conversing preparatory to retiring for the night, "and was entertained there by a most remarkable geisha."

"'If there is folly in the cup, there is also wisdom in the brewing of it'," quoted Goto, absently, his mind of late being often occupied with calculations relative to Taro's enterprise. "You dined at the Yoshiwara, you say? I believe they still serve a very good repast at some of the houses there. By the way, nephew, how many of your ruffian laborers do you reckon on exporting with your first ship load?"

Taro regarded his uncle impatiently. He was more interested in the topic of The Jewel River just then than in the emigration question.

"With your permission," said he, "I would rather talk to you about the former Lord Saburo Ikeda's daughter, who is a geisha at The Jewel River, where I dined this evening."

"Old Ikeda's daughter a geisha!" exclaimed Goto. "Well, well. I recall her when she was a pretty little child. Times have indeed altered—'the coat of the animal changes with each new season.' I remember Ikeda when he and I were on the Baka-fu. A most self-opinionated man was he, and excessively narrow. I recall when he and I dined once together at Tokiyori Yo-Aké's besso in the Shiba woodlands. It was the night of Saito's attack upon the 'Foreign' embassies. Ikeda was airing an absurd opinion about pickling eels in sea grass, and I said—"

"But, uncle, I am attempting to tell you about his daughter," interrupted Taro, hastily. He knew that his uncle once launched on his favorite topic would conversationally exhaust every subject of gastronomy pertaining thereto. "I think her the wittiest and most beautiful girl I have ever seen," he continued. "I could not begin to do justice to her charms by a mere description of her; you would have to see her with your own eyes to comprehend her exquisite beauty."

"She is, then, so very beautiful?" queried Goto with sudden interest.

"She is called," answered Taro, rapturously, "The Breath of

Mukojima, and, indeed, she reminds me of nothing so much as a handful of light, airy, floating cherry petals."

Goto chuckled.

"'To a lover's eyes a pock-mark has the beauty of a dimple'," he quoted. "I do not know that I should encourage you in this affair, Taro; still, young men must have their day. I remember in my time a very famous beauty at the Sign of the—"

"Uncle," interrupted Taro again, solemnly, "I want you to come with me and see Ikeda's daughter with your own eyes."

"I!" exclaimed Goto, sitting up in his surprise. "By Uji-no-mitama, the boy is mad! It would hardly be advisable for a personage of my importance to be seen attending a house of the 'Flower Quarter.' 'The elephant does not walk abroad unobserved'."

"You might so becloak yourself that no one would know whom you were," suggested Taro.

Goto shook his head.

"'The lion deprived of his mane has still his roar'," he objected. "Considering my prominent position, I fear it would not be wise, nephew."

"We could take 'rickshas, beneath the hoods of which we would be unobserved," continued Taro, "and, upon arriving at The Jewel River, enter by a private way so that none need know that General Baron Goto of the Imperial Army was a visitor to the Yoshiwara."

"And, pray," asked Goto, somewhat ponderously, "what sort of a figure would General Baron Goto of the Imperial Army resemble muffled up to his eyes and sneaking into a Yoshiwara house by the back way? 'Fuji disrobed of its crest would lose its majesty'."

"But, uncle," persisted Taro, all those details can be arranged without causing you either loss of dignity or annoyance. Besides, think how seldom we are, or can be, together nowadays. Surely you will not refuse me this small boon?"

Goto pondered a moment.

"'The dam must often cross unsound ground to follow the colt'," he mused. "Well, well, nephew, perhaps you are right. The 'pleasure of recalling kindly acts robs parting of much of its sting.' By Uji-no-mitama! I am getting to be an old fellow. You say take

'rickshas to this Jewel River? Ha-ha! in *my* day we young men used to ride thither on white horses—but, times are changed, times are changed. Yet, with a good bottle of wine and a pretty woman, who knows but that I might grow young again, nephew?"

VIII

POTTER AND POTS

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Sufi pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?" —OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE two houses of The Jewel River fronted on the Nightless Street, being bounded on the one side by a smaller thoroughfare known as the Street of the Sorrow-Love, and at the back by an alley from which a rarely-used exit led to the rear of the brothels. By this back entrance Taro conducted his uncle, Baron Goto, into

The Jewel River the following night, and on up the rear stairway to the story above, where a dinner room was reserved for them. From just beyond this room a bridge—the Bridge of Love—spanned the small gardened courtyard between the two houses, and led to the balcony opposite. Mainly the rooms looking out on this belonged to the *oiiran*, but the two rooms nearest the back stairway had been allotted to Saburo Ikeda and Ren-ko.

To Taro's impatient chagrin, Breath of Mukojima was late in making her appearance on this occasion. Grown impatient, he at last arose and slid the shoji, when, to his surprise, he saw her, preceded by two elderly men, leaving her room across the bridge. He drew his uncle's attention to this, whereupon Goto suddenly exclaimed—

"By Uji-no-mitama! if that is not Watanabe and Nakamura! I had heard they were both impoverished since the Restoration and supporting themselves somewhere on the outskirts of the city by the cultivation of flowers."

"Who are they?" queried Taro, in no very good humor at Ren-ko's delay.

"Old daimios of the Tokugawa days," exclaimed Goto. "I knew them both personally."

"They must be doing a thriving trade with flowers to be able to afford geisha," observed Taro, ironically.

Before Goto could make further comment Ren-ko entered, dispelling by her wit and beauty Taro's ill temper. Thereafter the dinner progressed favorably to its conclusion, Goto on their way home expressing himself to Taro as greatly taken with the latter's inamorata.

In the meanwhile Ikeda's conspiracy had been gathering way to the satisfaction of those concerned, particularly Tanaka, who, while not one of the plotters, had, nevertheless, an acute interest in the furthering of the scheme. Watching the constantly increasing stream of former Shogunate partisans to his house, he congratulated himself not a little on his astuteness in deciding to loan Ikeda the *yen* one thousand, for, whichever way affairs should ultimately turn out, he would be a heavy gainer. Even should Ikeda untimely fail, Tanaka, according to the terms of the contract,

would be the proprietor, body and soul, of Ren-ko, whose fame had already served as a drawing card to The Jewel River. Tanaka reckoned that not a few thousand yen would swell his profits before her meager percentage would be sufficiently accumulated to liquidate her father's original indebtedness to him. Therefore he was well satisfied with the continuance of affairs as they stood.

Ikeda, on the other hand, was consumed with a feverish anxiety to force the final issue. But three months of the stipulated time toward the repayment of the loan remained, and meanwhile there was a world of detail to be accomplished. True, his hopes regarding Saito had materialized, yet, despite all his scheming and running hither and thither, the culmination of the plotting progressed with maddening tardiness—and there was always the daily danger of discovery.

Saito, having arranged his samurai in Satsuma to his liking, decided to remain in Tokyo, rendering necessary assistance to Ikeda, but to Ren-ko, more than any of the others, was due credit for the daily addition of fresh names to the document prepared by Ikeda—a document simply stating:

We do swear to accomplish the liberation of our Japan of the gods from its "Foreign" yoke; to assist Saburo Ikeda, in which we pledge our souls, our swords, our wealth and our lives.

Now most of the intending signers of this had tried conclusions with the Imperialists in the era of Meiji, and were more than convinced that any demonstration against the existing government would, at the present at all events, prove anything but a success. Furthermore, one and all had a deeply ingrained reverence for the Mikado, who was the focusing point of the state spiritual as well as the state temporal. These facts rendered many disinclined to contemplate again drawing their swords against the cause of the son of the son of the god, and herein Ren-ko became invaluable, for whatever were the means she employed, or powers of suasion she used, it is certain that no known one of the many fish brought to her feet, by her father and Saito, escaped without adding their names to the other signatures and seals upon the document entrusted to her keeping.

The day following the little dinner given by Taro to his uncle, the former again sought The Jewel River in quest of Ren-ko, and was again kept waiting, this time by a handsome soldierly man, of distinguished presence and dress, who, having left Ren-ko's apartment with her father—so Taro observed through a small opening in the shoji of his room—turned back for further conversation with her. Something in his manner and her actions annoyed Taro, and he determined to find out the name of this unknown rival and his connection with Breath of Mukojima.

The next day had been set apart by both Goto and Taro to fulfill a dinner engagement with Lord Yo-Akè at Shima Castle, and afterwards to call upon Tokiyori and Kiku-ko at the besso nearby. Arranging to meet his uncle at Shima, Taro took 'ricksha thither, arriving at the castle before his uncle. The marquis was a charming host, attentive, courtly and most catholic in his conversational topics, and few men had mastered the art of listening to better purpose than he. Led to the subject by his host, Taro launched into the question of his enterprise, drifting from thence to a detailed description of his own life in San Francisco prior to his present home coming. In this he became so engrossed that he absorbed the entire conversation.

The marquis asked him about Midzu-hara, Mata's stepson, whom he had dispatched to America with introductory letters to Taro, and was pleased to learn much in detail of the lad's new life.

"I determined from the first," said Taro, "that your lordship's protêgè should be put in the way of profiting by my experience. When I first became a resident of San Francisco, I discovered that the yen one thousand given me by my uncle, while it would have more than sufficed for my wants here, was inadequate to maintaining me in a similar position for any length of time in the United States. Therefore I determined to undertake some definite occupation that would also afford me an opportunity of learning the language and customs of the people. Yet, because of my utter ignorance of the English tongue and lack of knowledge concerning any trade or business, I was left with a very narrow field from which to choose. Eventually I decided to become a house servant,

engaging my services in that capacity as against my board and lodging. Gradually, however, as I became more proficient and better acquainted with the language, I was enabled to ask added remuneration for my services."

"It speaks very well for you, Mr. Taro Goto," commented the marquis, "that you did not permit your occupation to interfere with your studies."

"That would have been hardly possible in any case," responded Taro, smiling. "The lady with whom I was domiciled took a most kindly interest in the forlorn young Japanese, even somewhat neglecting her own children to afford me hours of instruction in her language—hours that I turned to the best and quickest possible profit, so that I was shortly in a position to leave her service and seek similar work where I would have greater opportunities of study. Following out this method of procedure, I passed from one household to another, until finally I became valet to a general officer commanding the United States troops at the Presidio, or military depot, in San Francisco, in which latter service I was enabled to learn much of importance concerning coast fortifications there and subjects of like interest. Of course I was careful in this situation to conceal my now thoroughly acquired perfection in the language, so that because of my supposed ignorance I gained much information on many strategic subjects of guarded secrecy.

"Profiting by this," continued Taro, after a moment's pause, "I arranged, immediately upon Midzuhara's arrival bearing credentials from you, to install him as body servant to a naval officer stationed at Mare Island, the Pacific naval base of the United States, being influenced to this particular choice of situation because I gathered from your lordship's letter that you intended him ultimately for a naval career. His duties are light, and if he exercises his ingenuity he will be able to pick up much valuable knowledge."

"And were no suspicions aroused as to your proper sphere in life?" asked Lord Yo-Akè.

"None," smiled Taro, "for my cue was not to talk, but listen. My masters could not know whether I was coolie or noble."

At this juncture the baron arrived, and while awaiting the an-

nouncement of dinner, proceeded to entertain his host with an account of Taro's affair at The Jewel River.

"'As the swallow passes the nest, the parent birds fail to recognize him as the fledgling of the spring'," he quoted to Lord Yo-Akè, with a mischievous glance at his nephew. "Taro has returned to me so full of worldly knowledge and wisdom that I dare scarce refer to myself as his uncle."

"He is, indeed, a young gentleman of whom much may be hoped," replied the marquis. "It seems regrettable that having again found him, as it were, you must so soon lose him, for I am given to understand that Mr. Taro contemplates an early return to America."

"That remains to be seen," rejoined Goto, with a merry twinkle. 'The magnet in a woman's eye can sometimes anchor the most quick sailing of junks.' The hour of Taro's departure is not yet recorded in the day book of The Jewel River."

He laughed jocosely, and the marquis raised his brows in polite inquiry, while Taro grew suddenly red and uncomfortable.

"Nonsense, uncle," he observed, hastily. "The fact of a casual visit of mine to the 'Flower Quarter' can scarce prove a topic of much interest to Lord Yo-Akè."

Goto threw his head back and chuckled in his stentorian tones. He was getting huge enjoyment out of the Yoshiwara episode, in his simple way.

"Casual!" he guffawed. "Casual? Ho-ho-ho!"

"Pray let us hear the story, if Mr. Taro has no great objection," adjured the marquis, with his ever-courteous solicitousness concerning any topic of apparent interest to a guest.

"I fear your lordship will find this one of but small entertainment," replied Taro, answering for his uncle. "The facts are that I chanced one evening to be strolling through the Yoshiwara, and sought a neighboring house—The Jewel River—for dinner. There I was entertained by a geisha so witty and so exquisitely beautiful that she impressed me. Inquiry elicited the information that she is the daughter of the former Lord Ikeda, whom I recalled as a one-time acquaintance of my uncle's. The geisha—Breath of Mukojima—I considered so well worth seeing that I prevailed upon my uncle to accompany me thither.

"Which had to be done with the utmost care," supplemented Goto. "'The lion's nobility would suffer were he caught hunting among rats.' However, Yo-Akè, it appears that my boy is not the only victim to the charms of Ikeda's daughter—and she is, I vouch, quite as popular as beautiful—for while we were dining there I saw old Watanabe and Jiro Nakamura coming from what I learned were her rooms. But what most struck me was how either of them—both, I know, destitute since the downfall of Keiki Tokugawa—could afford that sort of thing."

"The folly of life is not to be measured by its age apparently," rejoined Lord Yo-Akè, "nor, it would seem, by financial considerations either. Yet, with you, Goto, I fail to understand why the impulses of youth should control maturer years. Even in our younger days such luxuries as visits to the Yoshiwara were conspicuous by their rarity rather than otherwise, and generally occurred—when at all—on some gala occasion subsequent upon the collections of our semi-annual rents. But proceed, Mr. Taro, I beg you."

"There is very little more to confess," said Taro, his mind easier by the every-day manner in which his host—of whom he stood secretly in some awe—had received the intelligence of Goto's little tale. "I chanced to dine there on another occasion, when I experienced a tardiness of attention by the geisha Breath of Mukojima. Eventually there emerged from her rooms four men, one of whom I recalled as the former Lord Takeo Mikuni, a one-time playmate, and the second of whom I identified as Saburo Ikeda. The other two were unknown to me, but one of them must be, I judge, on terms of great intimacy with Breath of Mukojima, as he left his companions and re-entered her rooms, where he remained during the rest of my stay that evening at The Jewel River."

"You say you saw Takeo Mikuni there?" interpolated Goto. "I heard he had fled somewhere to the south after the Restoration, although his brother, Fumiyo Mikuni, is high in Imperial favor at present. But have you no idea as to who is your rival, Taro?"

"None, saving that he was a soldierly appearing man of perhaps five-and-thirty, or forty years of age," replied Taro.

"A description that might easily be applied to quite a number of individuals," commented the marquis, smiling. "But I perceive our repast is in readiness and that my old friend the baron is growing somewhat impatient. It is an infallible law of human existence, Mr. Taro, that as our mentality ages in wisdom, our material propoganda grows more childlike, and requires ever more careful nursing and attention."

IX

THE GARDEN'S HYACINTH

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THAT afternoon Saito had called at the *besso,* and in the absence of Tokiyori had lingered to chat with Kiku-ko. After a few moments' conversation, he relapsed into a sort of moody self- retrospection, for he still loved her as ardently as he had that never-to-be-forgotten night in the wistaria bower at Moto. Finally, Ki-

ku-ko rallied him upon his preoccupation, ascribing it to love-lorness.

"One would almost think," said she in a spirit of banter, "that you had become enslaved by some beautiful creature and are regretting every minute not spent in her presence."

"That is true," he answered, moodily. "The gods know I sometimes wish that I might lose my reason if with it I could also lose remembrance, and the poignant and ever-present sorrow that remembrance brings."

"Is forgetting so difficult a matter?" she asked, thoughtlessly, and then, realizing almost immediately what his reference meant, blushed in some confusion.

"It is not difficult—it is impossible," he replied. "I can find no surcease in work, nor could I, I fear, in dissipation. Those two are, I believe, the established substitutes in most men's lives for disappointed hopes. To me they are unavailable. Perhaps the gods have cursed me with an over-imaginative mind—I know not, but that I can not for one moment forget our love, Kiku-ko, each heart-beat of mine reminds me."

"Heart beats are but the ticking of time," said she, quietly. "Who takes account of the tickings that are past?"

"If there were no past tickings how could there be present or future time?" he asked. "If there were no dead, where would be the quick? I can no more bury the memory of my slain love than I can the memory of my ancestors. If it were not for both, would I be myself?"

"You might have been a greater you," she hazarded; and then, quickly, "and yet not that either, Saito. I would not in my woman's heart have you other than you are. I do not think that I, myself, have grown calloused, or have ever forgotten the past—and beautiful Biwa of my maiden days. Ah, no; its very name and what it stood for has ever a lingering trace of wistaria about it. Yet, now, life has lain so many duties upon me that in their fulfillment I have scant time for other thought. I know what you would say, but it is so with a woman, Saito. Love is her whole existence—yet, how seldom it touches her with a tender hand! Rather it builds to her senses an ideal impossible of attainment, or

else an architectural shell, hollow as it is beautiful. Both are impossible of permanent realization. Happy the woman who, knowing naught other of life, asks of it but its duties and drudgery."

"You speak but for the woman," he replied, "yet is it not the same with the man? I, also, have my ideals—two—you and our Nippon. On these my star of life is set, in all that touches them is my nature lawless. I can not realize one waking hour of peace when both are not entwined before my eyes. At my daily practice of sword manual I am striking blows but for both, or, guarding, I seem to be shielding not myself, but you and Nippon. The very embers in my hibatchi, as I sit pondering late at night, form strange pictures of what might be. I would it were not so; that I could be as are other men, finding work and pleasure to absorb these things; but, as I may not, I must continue on in this re-incarnation, cursed by the gods, an ever-burning lamp to light another's ihai in the shrine of love. Was ever greater sacrifice demanded?"

He had arisen, when—as will happen at such moments—an interruption was created by Aysia, who had just learned that her cousin Saito had arrived.

"Who is a greater sacrifice?" she demanded in her quaint childish way, as she burst into the room on the last word of her cousin's.

"A great many people, little cousin," he replied. "Those who can not have what they want, for instance. And those who have what belongs to them taken from them."

"Then I am a very great sacrifice," rejoined Aysia. "Because nurse never lets me have many sweeties—unless grandfather Yo-Akè tells her to," she added, with candor.

"Her grandfather spoils Aysia with his indulgences," explained Kiku-ko, plaintively.

"Somewhat of a new role for Lord Yo-Akè to be assuming," Saito answered, ironically.

Aysia's mind—that had in it a suggestion of the perambulation and tenacity of her grandfather's—again reverted to the original question.

"Who is a greater sacrifice?" she repeated, and Saito, puzzled as to how to answer her question, replied haphazardly:

"Why, little Shiny Locks, of course."

Aysia promptly settled herself upon a cushion close to her mother.

"Tell me," she said in a voice half of entreaty, half of command, "Who is little Shiny Locks?"

Saito, with a whimsical look at Kiku-ko, complied.

"Little Shiny Locks," he explained, "why she was a very good little girl who once lived in beautiful old Japan, and had a lovely dolly. One day the dolly got broken, so Shiny Locks cried, and she cried, and she cried so hard that by and by her shiny black locks became all damp with the dew of her tears, and refused to be shiny any longer.

"While she was crying thus, there passed a great samurai called Mighty Sword, and seeing her tears flow so fast, he asked Shiny Locks what he could do for her.

"'I have broken my dolly,' wailed little Shiny Locks, 'and have cried so hard that my locks are no longer shiny.'

"'Well, well,' answered Mighty Sword, 'I think I might mend your dolly for you if that will dry your tears.'

"Now Mighty Sword was so strong and skillful that he soon had Shiny Locks' dolly all mended, and more beautiful than ever.

"'Now,' said Shiny Locks, 'I am sure that my dolly loves you very much, Mighty Sword. You must go on to the wars, but when you return she will be waiting for you, and will marry you.'

"So she said sayonara to him, and Mighty Sword went on his way with the promise of Shiny Locks in his heart, and his big sword by his side."

Saito paused a moment to decide how to end his story, and then went on:

"Now Shiny Locks had two old parents, who were also very poor, and when they saw how beautiful was the dolly that Mighty Sword had mended, they said to little Shiny Locks:

"'Shiny Locks, you must take your dolly to the toy-maker's booth, where you may sell it for a good price.'

"Little Shiny Locks broke out into tears once more, and hugged her dolly to her breast.

"'Why must I sell my dolly?' she asked.

"'Because your parents are hungry,' said they, 'and all good little girls will do what they ought for their hungry parents.'

"'But my dolly is going to grow up,' objected Shiny Locks, 'and marry Mighty Sword, the big samurai!'

"'Perhaps,' answered her parents, 'but now we are hungry and must be fed.'

"So little Shiny Locks," concluded Saito, "took her dolly like an obedient little girl, and sold it at the toy-maker's booth, and when Mighty Sword returned from the wars to claim his bride, he found that she had been sold to the toy-maker's booth, so that he would never see her any more."

"What did Mighty Sword do?" asked Aysia.

"Mighty Sword," replied Saito, "was so grieved when he learned of this that he went away and killed himself."

"And that is sacrifice?" she asked, pensively.

"Yes—two," answered Saito.

Aysia had an objection to offer—valid to her young mind.

"Why didn't Shiny Locks' parents sell something of their own?" she queried.

"Quite right, my little daughter," answered a third voice, and all glancing about were aware of the presence of Tokiyori. Aysia, jumping up quickly, ran to her father, while Lord Saito bowed gravely to his host.

"I am rejoiced at the opportunity of paying my respects to you," said he, "although regretful to have displeased you by the little story with which I was seeking to amuse Aysia before taking my departure."

"Pray pardon my abruptness," answered Tokiyori, courteously, advancing into the room with his slightly limping walk. "It was not the story itself I objected to, I assure you, nor the manner of its telling, but the unfortunate practice of our national life which it symbolizes."

"I had not the slightest thought of such a possible interpretation," said Saito.

"I quite believe that," rejoined Tokiyori. "Yet the manifestations of the human mind are unfathomable, and how seldom do our thoughts, materialized by words, convey an exact and unwarped translation. But permit me to assure you of the pleasure

both my wife and myself derive from a visit from our kinsman. I trust this will be but the first of many. I need not speak for Aysia," he concluded, smiling as his little daughter thrust her hand into that of her cousin's, "for I perceive she has found an expression of affectionate welcome far more potent than mere words."

Saito patted Aysia's little head.

"It is a reciprocal attachment," said he.

Tokiyori turned to Kiku-ko.

"Would you be kind enough to see that your cousin and myself are served with tea and smoking materials?" he requested. "I trust you intend affording us the pleasure of your company at our simple evening meal," he added to Saito as Kiku-ko left the room to attend the wants of her husband and guest.

"You are most kind," replied Saito to his host, "but I regret my inability to encroach further upon your hospitality. My short stay in Tokyo is limited mostly to the transaction of business, and I fear that I have somewhat neglected that this afternoon and trespassed unduly upon my cousin's time by my already prolonged call."

"That is a somewhat one-sided view of the matter," answered Tokiyori, with his expressive smile. "I doubt that Kiku-ko could be induced to voice similar sentiments—ah, she has returned to speak for herself," he added, as Kiku-ko, followed by a servant, re-entered the room. "Your kinsman, my dear, was in the act of apologizing for what he choses to term the infliction of his company upon your leisure, an infliction that—I have taken upon myself to assure him—like historic facts, finds its happiest expression in repetition."

"It is said that the matsuri of Hina (the Doll's Festival) has no more ardent votaries than childless women," said Kiku-ko. "My delight in the western country of my birth is confined now to my hearing of it from the lips of my cousin Saito."

"The west is the only Hina country left in Nippon, I fear," observed Saito, as he finished his tea and prepared for departure. "Our dolls are bruised and broken, our idols are gone, our faith and honor destroyed, and even the flowers of our gardens are but what have dropped from the heads of our goddesses and taken a poor, second root. Sayonara."

X

IN THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

As SAITO left the besso, Lord Yo-Akè, accompanied by Baron Goto and Taro, was strolling thither in accordance with the promised visit to Tokiyori and Kiku-ko. It was still light, despite the setting of the wintry sun, and the virgin snow lay like a woolly carpet upon copse, castle and glades, saving where newly trampled

by the feet of 'ricksha runners. Suddenly, as the trio approached toward the small gateway, a figure emerged therefrom and entered a waiting 'ricksha, which immediately set off at a sharp pace in the direction of the city. Passing closely enough for discernment, the occupant saluted the pedestrians, Goto and the marquis returning his bow.

"By Uji-no-mitama!" ejaculated Goto, "if it is not Saito! I heard that he was permanently residing in Satsuma. I had no idea that he was in Tokyo."

"The material evidences appear against such a supposition," smiled Lord Yo-Akè. "He is not only in Tokyo—unless our senses deceive us—but had we finished our meal a few moments sooner, or not lingered to hear Mr. Taro's last tale of the decline of American shipping interests, we should have had the opportunity of greeting an old friend in the flesh. Personally, I am glad not to have missed your story, Mr. Taro. I trust," he added, laughingly, to Goto, "that Saito has not again taken the occasion of your absence to devour some favorite dish of yours, as—if my memory serves me correctly—he did some ten years ago at Otsu?"

Goto drew his brows together at the mention of this, for—trivially absurd as it undoubtedly was—it preserved somewhat of a breach between himself and Saito.

"You may jest about that, Yo-Akè, if it pleases you," he observed with severity, "but I tell you I place not overmuch confidence in one who tampers lightly with others private concerns. Such a person is apt to have two distinct sides to his character, and when I was a young man they used to have a saying in the Yoshiwara that 'one should look at the lanterns from behind, and the geisha in front'."

Taro during this conversation had been watching the retreating form in the 'ricksha.

"Whom did you say that gentleman is?" he inquired of his uncle.

"He?" said Goto. "That is Lord Saito of Satsuma. You must recall his name, nephew?"

"Saito of Satsuma!" exclaimed Taro. "Why that is the fellow whom I saw with Ikeda and Mikuni at The Jewel River, and who by his devotions to Breath of Mukojima deprived me of her company at my last visit there."

Goto burst into a great roar of laughter at what he considered a very good joke at the expense of his nephew, but the marquis—with apparent indifference—put one or two questions, regarding The Jewel River premises and its character, to Taro, until finally they entered the besso.

Here, after a short call, the baron and Taro departed in their 'rickshas for Tokyo, while the marquis, refusing the proffered aid of his son, retraced his steps—thinking deeply—toward the castle under the cold unfeeling light of the thin January moon that had just begun to show its rim above the Shiba trees. The recent information regarding Saito's hitherto unknown familiarity with Ikeda and his daughter at The Jewel River troubled him. When, added to this, he recalled what Goto and Taro had told him concerning the visits of several other ruined Tokugawa daimios in company with Ikeda, he felt that something of a serious nature might be afoot. Many plottings and counter plottings were in the hatching just then, and he conceived that he had possibly stumbled on one of the greatest importance, for he was not deceived, as had been Taro, by the tale of Saito's devotions to Breath of Mukojima, nor did he credit that Ikeda would have sacrificed his daughter to the life of the Yoshiwara for any lesser cause. The fact of Saito's probable connection with a possible conspiracy was in itself a matter of great menace, for—as was well known—Saito's name and prestige stood high in favor with all classes. But from the news that such former daimios as Mikuni were also apparently linking their names with Ikeda's, Lord Yo-Akè gathered his greatest source of anxiety, because Mikuni, as an example, had powerful connections in the present government, and it appeared to the marquis that Ikeda was consummating a carefully laid out plan to honeycomb all ranks and classes of society.

Pondering on this, the marquis reached the O-mon, or great gateway, of his castle, which swung open to admit him. He paused a moment under its entrance and looked back at the pallid moon that had now cleared the tree tops of the woodland's verdure. He had aged with increasing rapidity of late years, so that it had become necessary for him to employ the aid of a walking stick, and his features were deeply furrowed with lines of thought and care.

The snow on the roadway lay as silvery and fleecy as a winding shroud to enfold the deathlike stillness of Shiba—and the silver in his raven hair had turned as spotless as the untrodden snow. Of his earlier manhood remained to him but the brightness of eye—set in his aristocratic, thin, ascetic countenance, and the keenness of his untiring, seemingly unconquerable intellect. He raised his face to gaze calmly into the depths of the moon, and it seemed to the gateman, who stood awaiting his entrance in respectful attitude, as though it were the visualized visage of some earth-descended god—some immortalized being—for such had almost become Asano Yo-Akè.

As he stood in thought under the great gateway of his ancient, mighty fortalice, his lips moved silently, while the aureola of his working mind could almost be sensed by the half-awed gatekeeper. A shadow from some unseen cloud touched for a moment the edges of the great listless reflection in the skies, and it seemed to Lord Yo-Akè like the passing of a foreboding presage across the clarity of his country.

"The moon is a mirror that registers the night's good or ill with a faultless veracity," he mused, "and in its perfect reflection upon the surface of some night-lake may be discerned the silhouette of the man in the gliding boat, though they may not be visible because of the obscuring shadows. It mirrors the palace of the emperor, and it mirrors the brothel of the Nightless City tonight. Which may it mirror in the thousands of nights to come? The visage of the Son of the Son of the God, or the visage of Saburo Ikeda and his Yoshiwara dupes? Is our future emblem to be the sixteen-petaled chrysanthemum, or the soiled buddings of the 'Flower Quarter?' I wonder."

He turned to enter, and it seemed to the gateman that his lord had grown suddenly enfeebled, so that he was minded to proffer him escort to the yashiki.

"The night is very cold, my lord," said he, shivering slightly.

"The night of the shortening days is always cold, keeper," answered the ageing man, quietly; "cold, bitter and—who knows if ever ending? Close your gates and seek the warmth of your hibatchi, keeper; its glow will be your kindliest friend in the chill of the night."

He moved off while the gateman was still making up his mind to the somewhat unusual liberty of proffering his personal assistance to his lord, while the former stood watching the bent form leaning heavily upon the "Foreign" cane, until the *tama-gaki* hid his master from sight. The gateman scratched his chin thoughtfully, then he looked up at the moon a second, and finally, with a perplexed shrug of his shoulders, bolted and barred the O-mon.

"There are eyes that see best in the darkness," he observed to himself, "and they are said to belong to birds of the greatest wisdom."

He turned, still shaking his head, and entered his little lodge nearby.

In the meantime, Lord Yo-Akè had gained his house, and now sought his library, which of late had become the room most used by him. A servant preceded him, lighting the tall waxen tapers and andon, and then solicitously stirred a smouldering hibatchi until it glowed a rich red with its contained heat. With a nod of dismissal to the man, Lord Yo-Akè settled himself by the brazier, and sinking his head on his chest, stared into the heart of the burning coals.

"What pitiful ants we mortals are," he mused, "crawling around, and around, and around in one ever-continuous circle about some loud-mouthed proselytor, who for the moment finds sufficient unprobed logic to convince our limited senses of *his* likeness to the image of truth. Under this category is now, it appears, to be classed Saburo Ikeda, and yet I marvel how he could make a convert of such a man as Saito to a movement that must inevitably, in the event of its failure, mean disaster, ruin and death. What weirdsome vessel forms, we poor humans assume, to beguile some passing sakè-porter into filling our cracked and leaking bowls, a little moment, with life's liquor!"

He shrugged his shoulders slightly at the helpless frailties of mankind, and with his hypo-super-subtle faculty of assuming the workings of other men's minds, proceeded to lay bare the fabric of Ikeda's plot, speaking aloud as though Ikeda himself were present, and he but criticising certain doubtful features toward the outcome.

"Your reasoning, my friend," said Lord Yo-Akè, "is wisdom personified—in as far as it goes—yet you are handicapped by the fact that your mind is not of that order that can plan to do a great thing for the sake of the thing itself, but leans rather to the scheming of a multiplicity of things for the sake of yourself alone. Thus, having converted your intellect into a specie of mental oven, you have created yourself a political potter, and in this role have filled that limited oven to overflowing with a number of different vessels, each requiring various degrees of heat to bring them to perfection. Yet, Ikeda, my friend, I think the great potter attempts but one masterpiece at a time."

He sighed, as though at the unwisdom of Ikeda, and then continued.

"If then we humans are but a varied assortment of pottery, mark well the hand-craft of the master workman, Ikeda, my friend. He molds his pots each according to his best conception, and shapes them as he intends they shall appear throughout their life of clay. Then comes the time when he realizes that each of his creations must stand the test of fire—it is the crucial time in the lives of these poor pots. Anxiously he opens the oven door to draw them forth. Some are so beautiful that they exceed his highest hopes and imaginings. But, alas! some are utter failures, their colors run, their glazing splotched and foul. Whose is the fault. The craftsman worked with his greatest skill, the pots were but the shapings of his brain and fingers—until the test of fire.

"Now comes the last stage in the lives of these pots. The true return the craftsman many times the hours of his labor, but for the failures remain no niche in the ornamentation of life which they may fill, Ikeda, my friend."

He ceased his musings, and observing that the hibatchi was growing cold, took up the small irons to stir it—then he paused, and abstractedly dropped them at the side of the brazier.

"I am an old man, now, whose fast thinning blood, each, about-to-be, imposed sacrificial act turns to a frozen pool, and each new day now but brings an added chill of loneliness. Gods! of all whom my domains has housed is there none to relieve me of this strangling desolation, the agony of my thoughts?"

He clapped his hands thrice.

"More lights," he ordered of the servitor who entered. "This apartment is scarce less gloomy than a death-sealed tomb. Bring fresh coals for my hibatchi and dispatch a messenger to the besso of my son, the count, requesting his presence here."

XI

THE PORTER'S SHOULDER-KNOT

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

AFTER bidding his father sayonara at the entrance to the besso, Tokiyori re-entered, seeking again the room where Kiku-ko still sat, answering, in desultory fashion, Aysia's stream of chatter. She glanced up at him curiously as he entered, for his reproof of Saito's story had set her mind working in a new channel, and there were questions she desired to ask of her husband.

"I am rather worried about father," he observed, as he took his seat by the hibatchi. "It seemed to me, tonight, that he had suddenly aged very much. Perhaps it is because I have realized it for the first time. Have you not noticed it, Kiku-ko?"

"No," she replied, "not in the way you mention. Of course we are none of us growing any younger, and doubtless it is because the daimio has recently taken to a walking-stick that he seems so much older to you. Yet I suppose it is but natural after all; he must be nearly three score of years in age."

"He has passed his sixty-second birthday," answered Tokiyori, "yet mere years would hardly account for his declining appearance. I fear I should not have permitted him to depart homeward unaccompanied; yet he insisted."

"I would not worry myself so greatly were I you," enjoined Kiku-ko. "Your father has still the appearance of a hale man, and his faculties seem as active as ever."

"More so, I should say," he replied. "His capacity for assimilating all sorts of knowledge recently is little short of marvelous. I find him constantly delving in the classics of other countries—their philosophies, economic treatises, poetry and history. I marvel how, even in his semi-retirement, he can find time for such a voluminous consumption of literature."

"How much older is grandfather than you, father?" asked Aysia.

"About five-and-twenty years," replied her father, smiling.

"That's a whole lot," announced Aysia, after a contemplation of this, to her, startling fact. "And is he twenty-five years older than mother, too?"

"Much more, dear," answered her father.

"I am nine years of age," observed Aysia.

She remained silent some little time after this announcement, while her father and mother entered into a discussion of the events of the afternoon and evening. Suddenly Aysia broke out with:

"How much older is cousin Saito than I, father?"

"I don't know exactly, Aysia," replied her father.

"He is just one year younger than you," said Kiku-ko to her husband.

"Then that would make him eight-and-thirty years of age," observed Tokiyori. "Why are you so anxious concerning people's ages, Aysia?"

"Because," replied Aysia, thoughtfully, "I was wondering whether cousin Saito—if he wasn't too much older than I—would marry me when I am grown up, like Mighty Sword, the samurai, waited for little Shiny Locks' dolly."

"What a perambulating mind you have, child," remonstrated her father. "I am sure it is much past your bedtime. Say oyasumi nasai to mother and father, and run along to your nurse."

Aysia, despite a good deal of petting, and the over indulging she received at the hands of her grandfather, stood a little in awe of her father. She arose upon his bidding, and with a quaint little bow, quitted the apartment.

"Why do you so object to that simple little fairy tale that Saito told Aysia?" asked Kiku-ko, chidingly, ascribing Aysia's dismissal to her mention of it. "The child thoroughly enjoyed it, and it is a harmless enough legend of old Japan."

"I can not agree with you," he answered. "It is a perfect symbolism of the practice of selling our womenfolk into a life of degradation."

"It is a recognized right, legalized also by the Diet in which you sit," she retorted. "I do not see why you should take exception to what you have helped inaugurate."

"I have always fought the legalizing of the practice," he objected.

"Yet, you have made it possible," she rejoined. "It was from your sex alone that the key to the wanton's chamber was filed. Your sex made her such, your sex built the abode for her, and your sex forced her to enter therein—to satiate its appetite, to fill its pocket, not hers. I can not see why such excessive moral tone is needed to cover up the crime of your own acts. To me it but tells of an added hypocrisy."

"A sad truth," he admitted, "and because of which I for one am now striving to find some remedy for it. You may recall that, upon my return to Nippon, just prior to our marriage, I once told you that I believed the future of our country lay as much in the

lives of our women as in the brains of our men. In this belief I daily raise my voice in the Diet against the inherent customs of our land, to bring about an emancipation for our women."

"Such an emancipation may come when night is day—evening dawn," rejoined Kiku-ko, sardonically.

"Perhaps so," he answered, quietly, "only I am sure it will never come to those who think as you appear to. I am referring to an equal moral law that would make compulsory sales to the Yoshiwara no more binding upon the one sex than the other. That will be the first upward step. Yet, possibly you are right when you doubt its definiteness, for not from the lips of man, but from the broadened intellect of women will come, after all, her true emancipation. As yet she can not touch the outer hem of the real garment, her complement of senses is still lacking, and impulse and vanity really control her whole thought and actions. I can but work, and hope."

"Your ambition appears to me a dreamer's vision—a floating sea fog—an Island of Nowhere," said Kiku-ko, nettled.

"An Island of Gold," he replied, "born with the dawn of a pure day; yet, alas! invisible to the color-blind. The receding tide must wash from its yellow sands the corpses of the past, corraling a thousand lagoons to wall the moaning of the sea's evil from the island, and there a garden may come to be formed of beautiful flowers and fruits. What matter if the first furrows are but broken by the rude hand of some poor ploughman? The gardener that follows will find the soil readier to his sewing. My fellow members of the Diet look with no approval on what they term—even as you, Kiku-ko—my visionary dreams of reform. It may be that the recent mass of petitions from Yoshiwara proprietors have frightened them, or that they do not judge the time yet ripe. Whatever the causes, they have—for the moment—prevented my aims from becoming realities, and mostly, I think, because neither they nor those creatures who gain their livelihood in the traffic of human bodies and souls, understand in the least what my aims will mean."

"I doubt that you will ever be able to abolish the Yoshiwara," objected Kiku-ko.

"You take exactly the same view as does the Diet," he rejoined, quietly, "and with quite as much understanding. Yet, I assure you, I am no such foolish dreamer as to hope for a complete eradication of the so-called 'social evil.' I leave all such Eutopian ideas to acknowledged reformers, who, among their carefully considered plans for the betterment of conditions, invariably exclude the one salient factor to the life of the world—human nature. No, I do not even hope for an ultimate abolition of such; I merely seek to protect the innocent who are summarily sold into such a life because of the idleness or greed of their relatives and sponsors. If I can succeed in initiating the passage of a law which shall make all such sales illegal—criminally illegal to all contracting parties—I may save some innocent victims from the results of our inherent, and still living, mediævalism. There are women, I quite realize, to whom such a means of financial gains will ever be more alluring than almost menial labor for pittances; nor, in general, are they to be blamed for seeking the only obvious means of protecting themselves against the miseries of poverty to which the greed of mankind has condemned them. My project will not in any way interfere with such, but it will make the first push on the downward path, penal for the offender. If I can, therefore, help ever so little toward the protection of such, it may be that I shall not have lived in vain."

Carried away by the depth of feeling which his spoken thoughts evoked, he had arisen, and stood facing her. It seemed to Kiku-ko that this man, who in her eyes had always compared so unfavorably with such as Saito, loomed suddenly to gigantic proportions, measured by which Saito himself would but scale the height of a pigmy. She did not know that the one man was the embodiment of the materially sensual of life, the other the sensuous intellectuality; but she did realize that there was more to her husband than she had thought heretofore. Perhaps this was but the result of her feminine pleasure in being mastered, for Tokiyori, in the earlier part of his discourse, had spoken in somewhat contemptuous vein of her capabilities of understanding.

Now he seemed to sense the change that had come to her so suddenly, and, from some unknown and unnoted impulse, half

stretched out his arms to her—a thing he had never contemplated doing before. She could scarcely credit the evidence of her senses—then a faint glimmer dawning for her, arose too, still half uncertain.

A servant entered.

"Your pardon, my lord," he interrupted, "the noble marquis, your father, requests your immediate presence at Shima."

He bowed and withdrew.

Kiku-ko stood regarding Tokiyori, a curious half-felt presentiment crossing her mind—why, she knew not. Suddenly she pressed her hand to her heart, her features assuming a waxen tone, as of death.

"Oh, I am falling! I am falling!" she cried, faintly.

He caught her in his arms, and in a moment she gently disengaged herself, and stood swaying slightly.

"Thank you," said she. "I should have fallen. I do not know what could have caused this spell of dizziness—I am not accustomed to such."

"It may have been the closeness of the room," he volunteered; "the hibatchi throws out a strong heat for so modest an apartment."

He crossed the room solicitously, and partly slid a shoji, admitting the cold, crisp night air. The moon found the opening, too, and played upon the glow of the brazier, turning its dull orange coals a pale brick color.

"If you feel better, Kiku-ko," said Tokiyori, "I will hasten on to Shima for a little while, as I fear my father may be ill and in need of me."

"Pray do so," she replied. "I assure you I have quite recovered from my unaccountable faintness."

He left the besso upon this, and Kiku-ko, standing by the open shoji, marked his vanishing form across the snow carpet that led to the House of the Potter.

XII

THE POTTER THUMPS HIS CLAY

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

IN THE great library of the castle Tokiyori found his father, and hastened to question him regarding his health. The marquis set his son's mind at rest, attributing his impulse in sending for the latter solely to an unconquerable selfish desire to dispell loneliness.

"As one grows older," explained Lord Yo-Akè, apologetically, "one seems to become more and more selfish. In my case it takes the form of a desire to cheat the encroaching hours of their loneliness; doubtless I am most inconsiderate of your and my daughter-in-law's domestic privacy. You must pardon this spirit in an ageing man, my son, and believe that—although it is one of the penalties of rank that one's sentiments may not be given publicity —nothing in life affords me such pleasure as your little visits to me."

"The pleasure is reciprocal," answered his son, "and, for me, instructive as well. Not even time itself will ever erase the memories of such interviews, my father."

"Time," soliloquized Lord Yo-Akè, gently, "ah, Time! Neither disease, nor death can weave such a tracery as spin the drawn cobwebs of Time. Disease? Disease but leads by mathematic transit to the change we term Death; but Time registers the unforgetting trade-mark of oblivion on the Forgot. The little glowing cheapnesses we set our hearts upon turn ashes as the chill hand of Time presses down the coals in Life's hibatchi. Or, for a breath, they smoulder, and, scarce thawing the ice of our freezing existances, are gone. No material conception may suspire before the corroding touch of Time. If you would be great, my son, learn to avoid Time—as I have not."

The two sat in silence a few moments, the marquis pensive, Tokiyori touched and awaiting. At last Lord Yo-Akè spoke again:

"With the encroachments of this tide-line of Time," said he, "it is both curious and saddening to note the changes that occur as the years and events pass in their kaleidoscopic procession; yet saddest of all are the daily human sacrifices we must pay the gods for the privilege of evoluting. Both you and I, my son, are such."

"Sacrifices?" asked Tokiyori.

The marquis nodded.

"A sacrifice," he explained, "may take many forms." And then, with his unreadable perambulation of thought—

"Do you recall Saburo Ikeda?" he asked. "Once Lord Ikeda of the Tokugawa Baka-fu?"

"Perfectly," answered Tokiyori.

"He has a daughter," continued the marquis, "who is blessed—or rather cursed—with a reported wondrous beauty. It is a thousand pities that such a lovely pot should be destined for the rubbish heap. She is an inmate of the Yoshiwara—another form of sacrifice, you see."

"Damnable in its repulsiveness," replied Tokiyori, sternly. It did not occur to him to question the methods by which his father seemed always to keep himself informed on even the most apparently trivial of subjects.

"Just so," agreed the marquis, quietly. "Alas for human nature! Ikeda has apparently prospered since her sale, and Breath of Mukojima—his daughter's 'house name' at The Jewel River, I understand—has proved a loadstone in attracting many old acquaintances of Ikeda's thither—former daimios who once held their fiefs under the Tokugawa government.

"It sounds as romanceful as a conspiracy," laughed Tokiyori, mirthlessly.

"Almost," agreed the marquis. "Thither consorts Saito, also."

"In that company?" asked Tokiyori in surprise.

"I am told he is a frequenter of The Jewel River," answered Lord Yo-Akè, ambiguously. It was never his custom to make definite statements, prefering the medium of suggestion.

"You infer, of course," observed Tokiyori, "on account of Ikeda's daughter?"

"Probably," replied the marquis.

"But I understood that he was mostly with his school of samurai at Satsuma," objected Tokiyori.

"That should not be a difficult matter to learn, *now,*" replied Lord Yo-Akè.

"Only purposeless, since he has retired from all participation in politics," answered the son.

"On the contrary," disagreed the marquis.

Tokiyori regarded his father, fixedly.

"You infer to be learned from Ikeda's daughter?" he asked, finally.

"Possibly."

"But, if she is his mistress?"

"She is also of the Yoshiwara."

Again Tokiyori regarded his father quizically.

"I do not think I quite follow you," said he at last.

The marquis relapsed into retrospection again.

"Mark the whimsicality of life, Tokiyori," said he; "the superficiality of years. I am—or I now should be—a more engaging conversationalist than I could possibly have been in my youth, yet were I to present myself at The Jewel River as a contestant in the arena of the Breath of Mukojima's favors, I fear I should provoke but derision and failure. Seriously, my son, it is imperative that we should ascertain exactly why certain daimios—and, above all, Saito—have taken to frequenting that particular house, *and with a man whose whole life has been spent in petty intriguing—Saburo Ikeda, an overthrown lord.*"

"Whom then do you destine for the unpleasant role?" asked Tokiyori. "Goto? He has no family ties. Or Taro, his nephew? He is a clever young fellow."

"Goto," rejoined the marquis, "is—among other objections—like myself, not so young as he once was, that alone would debar him from acting successfully in that capacity. And as for Mr. Taro—well, I am given to understand that he is somewhat in the nature of a rival to Saito in the lady's affections. Of course, in that instance, one could hardly expect him to—"

"Gain her confidence, and then basely betray it," finished Tokiyori for him, ironically. "No, I scarcely think Mr. Taro would lend himself to a proposal of that nature."

Lord Yo-Akè regarded his son with an expression of the utmost gentle compassion.

"You see how our field of representatives narrow," he said.

Tokiyori paced the apartment, then came to an abrupt standstill before his father.

"Before considering this question further," said he, "tell me exactly what it is you most fear in this matter of Saito and Ikeda."

"That is what I wish to find out," reminded the marquis.

"Then—as I understand it—you wish to discover why Ikeda has sold his daughter to The Jewel River, why Saito and Ikeda have suddenly become intimates, and why—if a dangerous why there

be—these Tokugawa discontents foregather at this Jewel River. Well, your object can be attained, it seems to me, without all this pother. If you suspect a conspiracy at the bottom of all, why not simply cause the arrest of the supposed ringleaders and have them held pending an investigation?"

"And by so doing," continued the marquis, "arouse the allegiance of the populace and thousands of other Tokugawa partisans to Saito's cause, and so plunge the whole country afresh into civil strife? That would be the outcome of the first governmental move against Saito. We must proceed with only the greatest caution. Our first safeguard lies in discovering, and then watching carefully. It is our best—in fact, I believe, our only—possible action."

"Yet, I can scarcely imagine," objected Tokiyori, "that this suspected conspiracy can have gathered sufficient headway to be a matter of such grave menace as you seem to suggest."

"Again I must remind you that that is what we must discover," replied Lord Yo-Akè, dryly. "One fact, at any rate, points to it as a dangerous sore in our midst—one of the Mikuni brothers is involved. You see what this means, of course, because of his powerful connections in the present government. If Saburo Ikeda has captured to his cause a Mikuni, why not others similarly placed? Who knows but that some morning we might awaken to find half the Diet taking sides against the remainder?"

Tokiyori nodded his head; he had to admit that his father's fears were better grounded than he had at first supposed.

"I do not seek to evade your meaning," said he, "but there is another aspect to this case that I would present to your consideration before you fasten upon me the role of spy, and the ignominy that will be resultant upon such. I can not approach this geisha, Ikeda's daughter, with the purpose in hand and expect any ultimate success without breaking every bonden tie in my present life. I speak frankly, because there is no other way in which I may say my say. Is the discovering of a thousand conspiracies worth this, my father?"

For a few moments silence reigned, broken at last by Lord Yo-Akè.

"You know what is hidden beyond those paper panes, my son?"

he asked, indicating the shoji that gave out on the Shiba woodlands.

"Why, yes—Shiba of course," answered Tokiyori, completely surprised at this sudden change of topic.

"You know their environs well?"

"Certainly."

"And the temples and tombs? The neighboring temple of Sengakuji, for instance?"

"Where the seven-and-forty ronin lie buried, and one other?"

"Yes."

"The one other is not of that immortal band," dissented Lord Yo-Akè; "the seven-and-forty will suffice. Seven-and-forty sacrifices—seven-and-forty morals. Do you ever make your devotions at those shrines, Tokiyori?"

"I have not visited the graves since when a boy with old Nakahara," answered Tokiyori.

"Yet, you recall their story?"

"Of course. Led by Kuranosuke they gave their lives for a vengeance."

"And something higher," supplemented the marquis; "for a duty —as they conceived it."

"A bushido one," observed Tokiyori.

"Time alters circumstances," affirmed his father. "In the course of the evolution of mankind what was noble in the ancestor might appear absurd in the descendant. Our sense of appreciation is molded by environment, yet the fundamental principles of all greatness defy even the prying chipping of the ages. Kuranosuke, a councilor noted for great wisdom, a husband noted for fidelity, a father noted for love and care, at an advanced age sacrificed all this repute to roll in the arms of a bought courtesan, and lie in the gutters of the streets a drunken derision. The world now knows that this was for a duty and to allay the suspicions of his enemy toward its accomplishment, his mead and that of the forty-six others who patiently followed his example—death. Among that band was his loved son. Such acts may be termed bushidic, my son, but their moral to the public is invaluable, the example they create in symbolism glorious. The memory of the seven-and-

forty will be ever green while flowers are born to deck their graves, while hearts are capable of pulsing quicker at tales of noble deeds."

He ceased speaking, and eyed his son anxiously. His short recital had been quiet and logical, delivered with that suppressed dramaticism of which he was a past master. He awaited the result.

"Your reasoning is—as always—irrefutable, father," said Tokiyori at last; "your argument, convincing; the implied suggestion, unmistakable. I never knew you to commit but one error in your life."

Lord Yo-Akè raised his brows.

"That oversight which you were guilty of," continued Tokiyori, "when, at the hour of my birth, you neglected to fasten upon me the name of Kuranosuke. . . . O yasumi nasai."

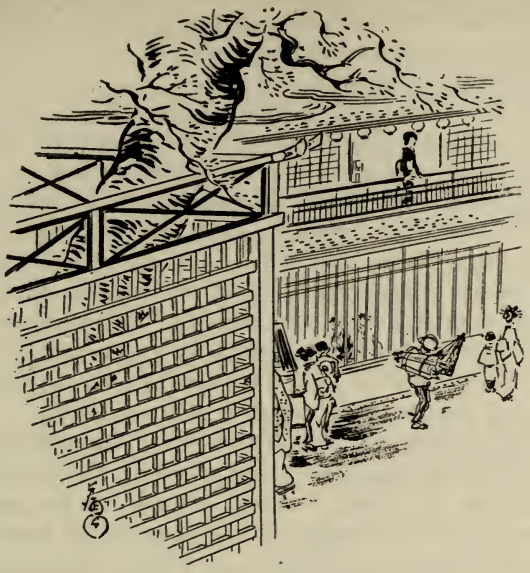
Lord Yo-Akè sat meditating after the departure of his son. A servant entered, and at his master's abstracted bidding, extinguished andon and tapers, so that saving for the faint glimmer from the little lamp before his wife's ihai, the apartment was in darkness. The servant withdrew.

"Life," meditated Lord Yo-Akè, "is an abysmal forest, still primeval in its vegetation. A sun patch breaks it here, and some new verdure is given a growth. A heavy shade falls there, and we know not which of the many trees obstruct the rays. Its lights and shadows are ever scintillating, for as the sun passes on its interminable path, where was darkness, *now* is radiance, and where clarity, density. Thus is the forest of life; ever changing, ever changeless; until an inanimate winter stamps it with apparent death. Then, through nude shivering branches, groaning beneath the weight of their snowy shroud, the full light floods upon the ground—a golgotha of dead leaves. Yet, after the sun has lain bare the earth in all its beauties, in all its imperfections, sorrily the re-incarnation of the leafing verdure must again darken the forest during the life of its rebirth."

He arose, tottering slightly, his head bent in thought. The faint glimmer of a little lamp—the never-extinguished light before the ihai to his wife—alone lit the oppressive darkness. Suddenly he

raised his head and listened—from the woodlands came the faint tinkling of bells—temple bells—it was the hour of midnight prayer at Sengakuji. He listened until the faint tinkling stopped, and then gazed intently at the shrine.

"There must be an eight-and-fortieth ronin," said he, softly, "the legend is yet incomplete."



XIII

THE DAUGHTER OF THE VINE

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

BARON GOTO bent over his desk in the War Department and solemnly regarded a number of drawings that three statuesque officers of his staff had just handed him for inspection and approval. It appeared that certain staff officers having lately petitioned to be allowed a more distinctive symbol of their rank than that hith-

erto laid down for them, a committee of Goto's aides had been instructed to prepare drawings of suggestions for a new style of uniform. These drawings were the result.

Goto bent his brows heavily.

"Why have you placed all this gold lace upon the coat-tails of the proposed uniforms?" he inquired of one, evidently the senior of the officers who stood stiffly at attention before him.

The officer explained that it had been thought the best place.

"'The rooster wears its colors in its comb, the peacock in its tail!'" vociferated Goto. "Do you suppose a general wants to command a soldier whose colors are all on its coat ends?"

"The object of thus placing the insignia," explained the senior staff officer, "is to render the uniform less conspicuous in time of possible war than if it were placed on the front of the coat where it might attract the fire of the enemy's sharpshooters."

"And in case of a retreat," supplemented Goto in ponderous sarcasm, "I should be having all my wounded shot in their coat-tails, according to your reasoning. No, no; the goldfish has many tails grafted upon his own by the skill of the fancier, but these impede rather than accelerate his swimming. I will not approve of such obvious nonsense! There is no place approaching the nobility of the chest for a soldier to receive his wounds in. Prepare another draft of suggestions at once."

Just then an orderly entered bearing a card, and with a salute of dismissal to his personal staff, Goto turned the card to decipher it:

COUNT TOKIYORI YO-AKÉ
Imperial Diet

"Show the count in at once," he commanded, and then waited, wondering what reason had brought him this unusual call from Tokiyori.

"This is an unprecedented pleasure," he observed as the latter made his appearance in the wake of the orderly, who immediately withdrew. "I was just about to seek an eating house nearby where they serve a very good repast, when you were announced. May I not have the pleasure of your company?"

"I shall be overjoyed," replied Tokiyori, "if you will consent to be my guest for this evening."

Goto assented, and a few moments later saw the two emerge from the chambers and make across the snow-melted street toward the yadoya designated by the baron.

"The fact is, baron," remarked Tokiyori, after they had taken their seats there, and somewhat appeased their hunger, "I have been overworked somewhat recently, and have thought of giving myself a few days leisure and pleasure."

"It is a very wise decision," agreed Goto. "I find sometimes, myself, 'that all ploughing, and no playing, makes the farmer careless of his furrows.' Although, I must admit, that since the return of Taro I have been kept fairly busy tagging after his footsteps. But where do we dine tonight?"

I was thinking of having a little dinner and a pleasant evening afterwards in the 'Flower Quarter'—say at The Jewel River."

Goto laid down his chopsticks and regarded his companion with wide open eyes.

"At The Jewel River!" he repeated.

"If you have no objections," added Tokiyori.

"I think you young men have gone mad about this Jewel River," observed Goto, without answering Tokiyori's question. "First Taro must needs drag me thither one evening, and now you come to me with a similar invitation. I dare swear the same loadstone is the cause of both. Frankly, count, I would rather dine elsewhere. In the first place it does not look well for a man of my prominence to be seen entering such places, and secondly—in the very strictest confidence—one is always liable to exceed an average amount of sakè in such places, which in my case results in attacks of gout. Another night like the one I spent with Taro and I should be confined to my besso for a week."

"What is this loadstone of which you speak?" asked Tokiyori, ignoring in his turn Goto's objection.

"Saburo Ikeda's daughter—Breath of Mukojima, as she now is called," answered Goto. "You must know her; she was a guest with her father at your house the night of Saitó's attack at Meiji."

"Ah, I was absent that night, you may remember," answered Tokiyori, "and so I have never seen her. You say she is an inmate of this Yoshiwara house?"

"For the last eight or nine months, poor child," replied the baron; "a geisha."

"Why was she sold?"

"Old Ikeda was destitute and had no prospects, I suppose," explained Goto. "It is a thousand pities."

"My dear baron, you arouse my curiosity," said Tokiyori. "Is she then so very beautiful?"

Goto leaned toward him impressively.

"She is exactly like a handful of light, airy, floating cherry petals," said he, remembering Taro's description of her. "Between ourselves, count, I am very sorry to find her in such a position. She was a bright, pretty child, and worthy a better fate than is now hers."

"She must indeed be well worth seeing from your description of her," mused Tokiyori. "I would really take it as a great favor if you would accompany me, baron, to this Jewel River. You might play the host and introduce me as a friend of yours from—say the north—Sendai way, for instance. It would be amusing. Explain to the lady that I am deeply interested in some large fisheries there—it will be less embarrassing for her than knowing that I was once her host—and that my name is—let us say—Takè—Takè san. I think that will suit admirably. May I count upon you for this favor, baron?"

Goto knit his brows, hesitating. He did not wish to refuse Tokiyori for several reasons, but introducing another man to one with whom he knew his nephew to be really in love seemed somewhat of a disloyalty. Moreover, he was really a most respectable middle-aged gentleman, and while it was one thing to accompany his nephew once to see a geisha with whom he was taken, it was quite another thing to make a practice of visiting the Flower Quarter.

"The fact is, baron," added Tokiyori, seeing Goto's hesitation, "I have my reasons for wishing to visit the lady in question incognito. That can best be accomplished through your aid—I am sure you will not refuse me this small favor once. I feel the need

of relaxation, as I told you, and—well, you know, even the nightingale changes its wants with the seasons. Need I say more?"

He assumed an air of "lady killer and roué" so foreign to his nature that Goto stared at him in amazement at his transformation.

"After all, baron," he concluded, simpering like any young "blood," "what is life without some beautiful woman? What fleeting pleasure so great as a brave carouse—a bottle of good wine and a temporary second marriage, let us say, with the daughter of the vine? A night of the gods—the vale of the immortals—and away, for the moment, with dull, sober, barren old reason!"

Goto caught the festive fire from his companion's words.

"By Uji-no-Mitama!" he shouted. "I believe you are right! 'The ever-working brush grows clogged and ragged with the ink.' I will meet you, then, at the O-mon to the Flower Quarter at—when shall we say?"

"Supposing we arrange for an hour after the sun has gone down. It will be dark enough then for our purpose. In the meantime, I must hasten back to my work. Sayonara till then, baron."

All that late forenoon and early afternoon the sun had shone so brightly out of a cloudless sky that there had been an almost suggestion of early spring in the air, but now, when the day had run its travail, the chill of winter again struck bitter, while dusk crept like a gaunt wolf through the streets and byways of the city. Yet, cheer and warmth were redoubled within doors as stately Night, gathering her robe about her, flaunted its star-flecked lining over Tokyo, and the Flower Quarter.

In the latter, where the upper balconies of The Jewel River gave out over the Nightless Street, Breath of Mukojima—once Ren-ko of the house of Ikeda—leaned upon the low railing watching the hurrying winter-clad throng beneath. Beyond, she knew that the great O-mon was now yawning to receive its nightly quota of pleasure seekers, for which the houses about her seemed to watch tirelessly, while the oiiran scanned each passerby through the bars of their gilded cages. Above, a cold, rain-circled moon had clasped the girdle of darkness about the night, and from the interior of The Jewel River arose ever-increasing sounds of jollity and

mirth. Soon now, she reflected, her evening work of entertaining would be called into requisition, and she sighed a little wearily at the monotony of it all—the seasonal close rooms, reeking with viands, sakè and stale tobacco; the half-tipsy revelers with whom she would be expected to bandy wit and pathos alternately, according to their moods.

At the junction of the Nightless Street with that of the Sorrow-Love, just beneath where she stood, a well known old umbrella vendor, who varied his calling by hawking caged cicadas in the summer months, was, with a persistent monotony, crying his seasonal wares that brought him his scant livelihood.

"Behold, most noble masters!" he importuned in a raspy, croaking voice, in the Yoshiwara jargon, displaying at the same time a gorgeous umbrella to catch passing attention, "here is that which will shelter you from the encroaching blasts of life, or hide your noble countenances from vulgar prying as you speed to pluck the night-flowers of the hot-houses. See, masters, upon it are pictured some of the most famous of the oiiran! Who will buy? who will buy?"

In a half spirit of compassion, Ren-ko dropped a small coin to the old peddler. She had on occasion performed like small kindnesses to the picturesque old fellow, so that quite a friendship had sprung up between the two.

"I doubt not," said she, "that your kasa will be in demand to catch the falling drops from the moon's umbrella 'ere the night passes." She pointed upward to the rain-rimed moon as she spoke.

The umbrellaman caught the dropping coin dextrously, and then following the line of her pointing, nodded his head.

"The moon has her umbrella out already," he agreed.

"May it bring you luck and money," cried Ren-ko, prettily.

"And may your samisen lilt as sweetly as a harp of the gods shod with flower-frets," he answered, readily. "May your feet tread the dance as lightly as a shooting star. The blossoms of Mukojima died when their fragrance was wafted to the Flower Quarter."

She clapped her hands—shapely and tapering as the unfolding petals of a wild iris—laughing at the old fellow's extravagances. Idly she noted two 'rickshas pass swiftly through the throng on

the Nightless Street and turn down the Street of the Sorrow-Love that ended at the alleyway leading to The Jewel River's private entrance. She presumed that they contained guests who might not desire their identity recognized, and, dismissing from her mind further conjectures regarding them, bent over again to a contemplation of the tireless little old umbrellaman. What a life—she mused—this of his! Unvariant, cheerless, probably lost by virtue of custom to any other interest than that occasioned by the ever-pressing needs for the maintenance of that life. Cold, or warm, the weather could but serve for him to form a limitless night-shop for the disposal of his day's labor. And, in return, doubtless but some dismal hovel, a wife embittered by the unequal struggle against an existence resultant upon an intellect limited by a decree of the gods, a coarse meal, and a lowly futon.

She contrasted this with her own life, prodigally dowered in comparison, and thought with conviction that not even love itself —so plentifully pictured as a safeguard against such ills in the romances of her country—could tempt her to an interchange of existences with the umbrellaman. Then the thought came to her that he possessed one jewel which she had not—freedom. Yes, he might come and go at will, whither or when he pleased—and she?

She recalled that the time of her allotted probation in The Jewel River was fast drawing to a close, soon to be changed into a permanent actuality of slavery should her father fail in liquidating the total amount of his indebtedness to Tanaka. Quite perfectly she realized what the alternative would mean, and—for she was most observing in detail—found no comforting possibility in any hopes that Tanaka might be induced to forego his pound of flesh. She shuddered a little at the thought. After all, might not the mendicant old umbrellaman be far better off in this life than such as she?

A shuffling of feet sounded along the balcony, at the far end from where she stood.

"Miss Breath of Mukojima is requested to entertain in the second room from across the Bridge of Love," announced a voice.

XIV

BY THE TAVERN DOOR

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bade me taste of it, and 'twas the Grape!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

As REN-KO entered the room of the two diners, she saw that one was Baron Goto, but the other was an utter stranger. Goto introduced his friend as Mr. Takè, of the north country. After the customary bows and acknowledgments, Ren-ko took her floor-cushion seat near the little maid who had preceded her with her

samisen, and just across the low table from Mr. Takè. As the dinner progressed, little dancing girls were introduced into the apartment.

The stranger observed the geisha, Breath of Mukojima, covertly. Tall she could scarce be described as, yet she seemed to suggest an exceedance of the height of Japanese women. Possibly this was because of the unusual, and apparently unconscious, freedom of movement which, when walking, bore her hither and thither as lightly and easily as a butterfly flutters from flower to flower. Her oval features, perfect in form and expression, were poised on a neck and throat of amber, pliant and undulant as the delicate stalk of a blown flower. She wore the customary dress of geisha—grey crêpe kimono, dark above and lightly shaded below into a pictured landscape, with crest of The Jewel River on sleeves and back. A large gold damask *obi* girdled this, and a snowy neckband enhanced its simple richness. White socks encased her shapely feet, while a coiffure of the Shimada type, held in place by a single hairpin of *susuki* grass design, completed and gave a setting to the whole. Yet it was neither in the dress, nor features, nor the vibrant pulsing of her full bosom where Ren-ko's greatest beauty lay, but in her eyes—clear, large, ever changing from a suggestion of the violets to the softest black of full night, liquid and sensitive as dew upon the grass-lands.

She took the samisen from the hands of her little attendant and drew from it a few plaintive, lingering chords, whereupon the dancing girls, swaying gently, executed the graceful story of a newly created posture-poem. At its conclusion these withdrew, and Ren-ko, laying aside her musical instrument, prepared for the customary interchange of wit and repartee.

"'A good horse is known by the graceful movement of its legs'," observed Goto, jocosely, draining a cup of sakè. "May I inquire the name of the beautiful dance we have just witnessed?"

"It is but recently composed," explained Ren-ko, "and is called the Dance of the Falling Cherry Petals."

"It is lightsome," commented Takè san, "yet not more so than your exquisite touch upon your samisen, which would make even the falling petals themselves seem leadlike in comparison, fair Breath of Mukojima."

"Yet falling petals are often lighter than sorrows of the heart," supplemented Ren-ko.

"In any event your sorrows have not weighted your fingers," rejoined Takè san. "Is the heart then so heavy?"

"The only scale whose weights are adjusted to its measure is called love," she answered, lightly.

"A scale whose perfect balance is often lacking," added Takè, laughingly.

He emptied his cup of sakè as he spoke, and stretched forth his hand for a fresh cup with an air of reckless gaiety.

"'The balance of the scale is easily tampered with'," quoted Goto, inspecting one of the bottles of the wine. "I'll wager these bottles were weighed in such. More sakè for my guest and self, attendant."

"Love is a god who never knew love," observed Takè to Ren-ko, in answer to her remark of a moment before.

"Love is a god created from himself," she retorted.

"Love is a miserable failure as a provider of meals, so I have observed in others," commented Goto, sagely. "Wisely, I have remained a bachelor."

Ren-ko joined in Takè's laugh at this sally of the jovial baron's, and the attendant returning at that moment with the fresh bottles of sakè, a diversion was created, in which Ren-ko had again recourse to her samisen. Her voice was soft and dulcet, making up in richness and sweetness what it lacked in volume, and the song she now chose—the Soul of the Cherry Blossom—suited it admirably. After a short prelude, her voice glided into—so it seemed, rather than began—the song:

All blushing, Mukojima greets
The new-born day;
Her blooms unfolding, one by one,
In pink array,
And as each petal opens it
Lisps love's roundelay.

In saffron runes a butterfly
Is tinged with dawn;

And, thus, the cherry-flower's soul
Is fluttering born
Like rosy babe from whom the quilts
Are sudden shorn.

Sorrow! the gentle flutt'r's wings—
But made for flight—
Have caught some ravish'd mortal's eye
In sheer delight;
And so the cherry's soul is waft
Into the night.

She laid aside her samisen, thoughtfully, while Goto remarked: "That is both beautiful and sad. It reminds me very much of two ladies whom I used to know. Their names were Nui-ko san and Toyo-ko san, and they were sisters. Somehow, I think they must have been—like thè mortal eye of your song, Miss Breath of Mukojima—always on the lookout for fresh butterflies. I had a narrow escape myself once, before I, too, was waft out into the night."

He relapsed into a fresh cup of sakè.

The jollity increased after this, jest following jest, quip following quip, and song following song, until Ren-ko noted that her two diners had apparently consumed all the sakè possible while still able to continue a conversation. In the case of Goto, indeed, Ren-ko saw that he was growing drowsy, but it was to the younger man—Takè san—that her attention was mostly directed. Although such scenes were now a common matter of occurrence to her, there was something about this frail looking stranger that told her his life was far removed from such coarse indulgences. Scarce knowing why, she conceived a sudden revulsion of feeling against such scenes—a revulsion deadened now by familiarity with them—that made her long for an end to all this.

"You have made no comment on my poor song," said she to Takè. "Perhaps it was not to your taste, or that you prefer the ballads of the sea, which are doubtless commoner in your northern country."

"You can hear them best when the tides are washing the eels in

among the kelp," remarked Goto with a smile of drowsy good nature. "It was there that Taro was born—I will drink another cup of sakè to Taro."

He refilled his cup with an unsteady hand and drained part of it, then sat regarding the two with a look of fatherly benevolence.

"Our northern customs and melodies may seem rough when compared with your softer practices of the southlands," said Takè, with a slight hiccough, "but in the north our hearts still beat true and unswerving to the Nippon of our fathers, nor have we ever cast aside the mantle of our Bushido at the bidding of a half 'Foreign' government."

He picked up her samisen as he spoke and strummed reminiscently a weird, unnameable sort of dirge as boundless in its effect as the sweep of the great ocean. Goto laughed happily—he knew not why.

"G'is song, Takè," said he; "song of the sea."

Takè laid aside Ren-ko's samisen.

"Songs of the sea are sad," said he, "and I would rather be gay, tonight. Give me another cup of sakè, and I will tell you instead a foolish little story of the denizens of the deep."

Ren-ko, inwardly protesting, served him a meager cup of wine, after having first—according to rigid Yoshiwara etiquette—seen that host Goto's cup was replenished. Then Takè, tossing off the liquor in a seeming reckless mood, arose suddenly and threw his arms out, knocking over a nearby screen.

A moment or so he gyrated about the room, making motions with his arms and body as though of one swimming, and finally came to a step near the table where Goto was watching him with a now almost vacant stare.

"In a great sea pool," began Takè, "once dwelt a school of tai, happy, prosperous; finding their spawning and feeding beds sufficient for all their needs. One fine watery day, one among them decided to swim past the mouth of the happy pool and see what was beyond. So he bade farewell to his kin, and went out to the great sea—very inquisitive and also very foolish.

"There he came upon a school of dolphins who were disporting themselves in the long, undulating swells. These leaped up so"—

Takè here made a half drunken attempt to mimic the diving of dolphin—"and came down so, while the inquisitive tai watched their antics in open-mouthed admiration. Finally he asked one of the dolphin why he leapt and dived in this extraordinary manner.

"'And how else should I progress on my way?' asked the dolphin.

"'Why, by swimming quietly along as I do,' replied the tai.

"The dolphin puffed a great line of bubbles, which is the fish way of laughing derisively.

"'You are but an ignorant fellow,' said he, 'who apparently knows naught of the great life of the seas. Whence do you come, and what are you?'

"'I am of the tai folk,' answered the inquisitive seeker, 'and I come from a beautiful pool, past the kelp in-shore.'

"'And have you never seen any of us king dolphin before?' queried the dolphin.

"'Nay,' replied the tai, 'for no strange fish are allowed to enter our pool.'

"'I can perceive that such may very well have been the case,' rejoined the magnificent dolphin, diving again. When he came about on his course once more, he stopped by the still watching tai.

"'Look you, friend,' said he, 'I can perceive that despite your ignorance you are a fish of very fine scales. Lead us, therefore, to this home pool of yours, and when we arrive there we will sit you on the throne of the tai fish and teach the other tai how to leap and dive as do we.'

"Now the tai thought that this was a very good idea, so he did as the dolphin bade, returning to his people to become their ruler. With him came the dolphin, and so curious was the impression they immediately created upon the tai that most of these latter soon started imitating the dolphin, until finally they became a new specie of fish, half dolphin, half tai. Then the dolphin settled down among them, and were given many very fine spawning and feeding beds, and soon the pool became the rendezvous of a multitude of all sorts of fishes, so that the customs and forms of the tai were about forgotten."

Takè san paused a moment and looked about him, for a gentle snoring had interrupted his tale. He noticed that Goto was fast

asleep, his head sunken on his great chest, evidently dreaming blissfully, to judge by the expression of happy serenity depicted on his countenance.

"My story, if not instructive, is at all events soothing," remarked Takè to Ren-ko, who sat with her chin in the palm of her hand, listening intently.

"Say, rather, it is so graphic in its telling," she replied, "that, like the motion of waves, it has rocked the baron to sleep."

"It interests you?" asked Takè, with a look and gesture in which there were no traces of his recent apparent intoxication.

"Excessively," she replied, quietly. "I am all anxious to learn the sequel."

"There is little more to tell—yet," said he. "This inquisitive tai continued opening up the once secluded pool to every specie of fish, till finally some of the few tai who had remained staunch to their old customs and thoughts, gathered together and elected one of their number spokesman and leader. Then said this one:

"'Lo, this tai fellow of our folk is despoiling our sacred waters, and has given away to these dolphin many of the best of our spawning and feeding grounds. He and the rest of our brethren are traitors, for they are no longer true tai, but half dolphin. Soon we shall be forced to roam the seas without, where we shall be ever in danger from passing shark and the perils of the deep. Let us therefore attack this tai and his followers and drive them, with the other intruders, away from our pool forever'."

"And did they so?" asked Ren-ko, as he hesitated.

"I do not know," he answered; "the rest of the story is yet to be told."

She regarded him a moment, and became convinced of two things; first, that he was not, and had not been, intoxicated as she had at first thought, and secondly, that he was either opposed to the present government or else a spy from it. Yet, as the companion of Goto—who still snored peacefully and guilelessly—she hardly believed this latter to be the case. She determined to test him, and if he were really sincere, to angle for his name to her father's document herself. Coming a trifle closer to him, she addressed him in an almost whisper:

"I admire your story no less than your manner of telling it," said she, smiling sweetly upon him. "Indeed it seems to me that the allegory you picture by your fish and the secluded bay might also read Japan, and those who wish her saved from the tai who have become dolphin."

"You have caught just my meaning," said he, in tones equally low.

"Yet, you seem to side with the true tai," she observed.

"I told you that we of the north are still loyal to our old Nippon," he answered.

Ren-ko mused a moment.

"It seems a thousand pities that such nobility of purpose should be confined to allegory alone," she observed, half to herself.

"Who knows if it always will," hinted Takè, darkly. "There are still some loyal spirits known to me who might some day assume the roles of the tai."

"And you?" whispered Ren-ko, "if the opportunity were shown you, would you help drive out the half dolphin?"

"Ah, if I could but be afforded the chance!" he exclaimed.

She edged a little nearer to him, and leaned so that her parted lips almost brushed his ear.

"Supposing," she said in the faintest of whispers, "that someone should show you how a blow might be struck for Japan—would you be one to strike?"

"A thousand!" he whispered back, fiery ardor in his tones. "I would never cease striking while breath were left in my body. But who could show me the way?"

She glanced at the still snoring Goto apprehensively, and then whispered again in his ear:

"Supposing I could?"

"Can you?"

"Perhaps."

"But why?"

"Oh, dear!" she pouted. "Is it necessary that one must give the whys and wherefores of everything—and I a woman? Supposing, then, it were because I have become greatly drawn toward you."

She blushed exquisitely and hid her face behind her fan. Takè clasped her hand in his and pressed it to his heart, rapturously.

"Ah, if you would but show me such an opportunity!" he exclaimed.

"Ma-a-a-a!" said she, derisively, laying a delicately tapering finger on his lips in admonishment; "we were only supposing. Let us confine ourselves to that—it is safer so."

He nodded eagerly.

"Supposing, then," she continued, "that I should tell you of a great conspiracy to free our country from the dolphin?"

"Yes?" said he, all anxiety.

"And supposing," she went on with a provokingly pretty smile, "that I should add that the Flower Quarter was where it held its meetings?"

He nodded again, too intent to answer.

"And supposing—oh, supposing that I should confide in you still further, and tell you that this meeting place was—was in The Jewel River?"

"Is that true?" he asked.

"How you do insist on a literality!" she pouted, plaintively. "I told you that we were only to suppose. Even then a careless word from you might prove my undoing."

He pressed her hand to his heart again.

"I swear to you," said he, "that you shall not regret your confidence."

"Well, supposing if such an opportunity did exist—"

"Here?"

"Here, and—"

"A plan to overthrow the present government?"

"The dolphin folk—"

"When may I know?" he whispered.

"Now—if you are ready."

"I am."

"But first, I am sacrificing much, perhaps; what am I to get in return for my risk?"

"Anything you choose to ask."

"Even if that anything were yourself?"

"That would be no hard thing to forfeit to you," he smiled.

Suddenly she withdrew her hand from his, and clasped his face

between her two warm palms, scanning his features as though she would read behind this mask of life.

"I will tell you—yes you, and you only," said she, "relying on your promise to give yourself to me provided I tell you the name of a conspiracy against the government, and its meeting place."

Again she just touched his ear with her lips.

"In the Flower Quarter," she whispered, "in this very street, in this house—are you sure of your intentions and promise to me?"

"Yes, yes," cried he, impatiently; "I swear it!"

"Was planned," said she, slowly and apprehensively, "the Saga rebellion!"

He fell back from her, from his knees to his heels, in sheer astonishment.

"The Saga rebellion!" he repeated, puzzled for the moment. "Why that failed two years ago!"

"I know it," she answered tranquilly; "but, oh, just think how different might have been the result had you been there to aid the true tai!"

He looked steadily at her, chagrin his most apparent feeling. Presently this gave place to admiration.

"Possibly," he replied, quietly, "unless I chanced to talk with a false tai first."

Just then an attendant entered, and kneeling close beside Renko, whispered something to her. As the servant withdrew, she arose, and bowed low to Takè.

"I must bid you sayonara now," said she, prettily; "I have to fill a previous engagement. I shall hope to see you soon again."

"When I shall hope to convince you that the tai are really the true fish," he added.

"I am willing now to admit one remarkable quality they possess," she replied—"their marvelous powers of recuperation from the effects of apparently deep libations. Pray make my humble farewells to your much less endowed companion, the baron. Sayonara."

She went lightly from the room, laughing softly, and Takè suddenly recalled, that but a short time since he had been supposedly quite intoxicated.

As the shoji closed behind her, he crossed to Goto's side and endeavored to arouse him.

"Come, baron," said he, shaking the still sleeping Goto lightly. "It is time we were moving."

Goto partially awoke with a jerk.

"Hi, th' ruff'n sta'mn!" he ejaculated, sternly, "shake not my n'ro'mno about so carelessly!"

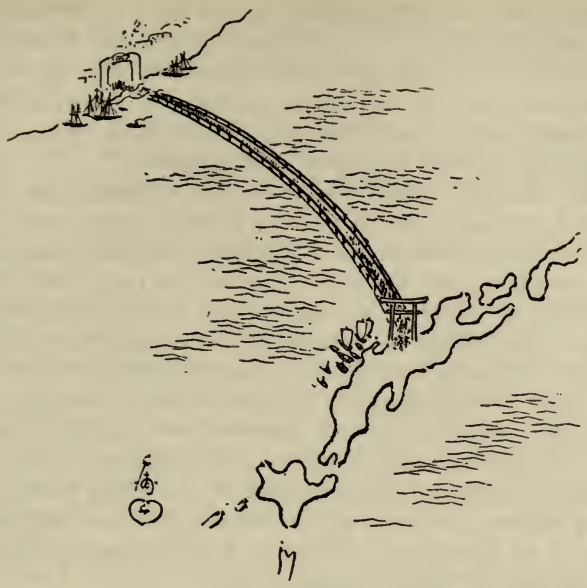
Evidently his pleasant dreams had taken him back into the good old days when he was Hoku-no-kami. He relapsed again immediately into a series of stentorian snores.

"Come, come, baron!" insisted Takè a trifle louder, shaking his companion less gently. "We are going home."

"Going home!" repeated Goto, awakening for the second time. "Going home!" He regarded Takè vacantly.

"'The stag leaves his pool only when the sun rises'," he said solemnly.

Takè, realizing that Goto—who, because of an artifice, had been made unconsciously to drink his guest's share of the sakè as well as his own—would require assistance to reach his awaiting 'ricksha, stepped to the shoji to summon an attendant. As he slid the shoji he perceived a figure, on the opposite balcony, stop at the second room from the head of the back stairway and call something in a low voice thrice. The shoji of the room opened, and he saw Ren-ko awaiting to admit the visitor. The latter entered her apartment; the glimmer from the andon within disclosed his features, they were unmistakably those of Lord Saito of Satsuma. Takè san, keeping himself well concealed, attracted the attention of a passing servant, and, after discharging the score for the evening's entertainment, proceeded to the task of assisting to convey the still peacefully sleeping Goto to his 'ricksha.



XV

THE PIECES OF THE GAME

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE next day the Marquis Yo-Akè and his son were closeted together some little time, during which the events of the preceding night were made clear to the former.

"I admit that the matter assumes a most difficult aspect," observed Lord Yo-Akè at the conclusion of the tale. "Evidently you

are dealing with one exceptionally clever for her sex, and doubtless as unscrupulous as she is clever—she would scarcely have been Saburo Ikeda's progeny and otherwise. Yet, to me, there seems no other way of solving this riddle than by what you may learn through her of her father and Saito's plans—that is always providing she does not penetrate your incognito."

"Another danger," agreed Tokiyori, "not so much from her, nor Ikeda, as from Saito. My personality is much better known to him than to her father, and as he is evidently persona grata with the lady in question, I am likely to come face to face with him there at any time. Of course such a catastrophe would end my mission."

The marquis pondered a moment. He recalled that Saito had once been an admirer of Kiku-ko's, and encouraged in his visits to Moto—much to old Nakahara's disgust—for very similar reasons to those which now presented themselves for wishing to keep Saito where he could be more easily observed. The same simple methods might as efficaciously be employed; for Lord Yo-Akè—ever a shrewd observer of what passed beneath his eye—believed that all memory of those days at Biwa-ko had not been effaced either from Kiku-ko's or Saito's recollections.

"You may set your mind at rest regarding any danger of meeting Saito at this Jewel River, provided you keep me accurately informed as to the hours of your anticipated visits there, I think," said he to his son. "He doubtless will be returning to Satsuma shortly, and meanwhile I may find some way of attracting his time and attention elsewhere. Goto's aptitude for sakè will prove of great benefit to you, for, while his company will serve as protection to you and your purposes, his proclivities in that respect may apparently be counted upon to render him oblivious to what is going on about him. I should always take him with me, were I you, Tokiyori."

"I do not know whether that will be always possible," remarked Tokiyori. "I had considerable difficulty in inducing him to accompany me this time, necessitating my ascribing my desires to visit the Yoshiwara to causes which I am sure have lowered his estimation of me considerably."

The marquis smiled slightly.

"I compliment you upon your acting," said he, "but I would give a good deal to know whether it equally deceived the girl, also."

"She is unfathomable," answered his son; "but of one thing I feel sure—"

"Yes?"

"That it will take many more visits, and a much more appealing way of paying them, before her confidence may be counted as won."

He arose to take his departure, but his father detained him a moment longer.

"By the way, Tokiyori," said he, "I wish you would see that the government makes an application to the United States Government for the admission of my prôtegè, young Midzu-hara—Mata's stepson—to its naval academy as a student. It may be necessary to represent him as the son of the Marquis Yo-Akè to gain this—I am not informed as to the required rank of intending cadets—if such should be the case, describe him as such, pray."

"I will attend to that at once," said Tokiyori. "Is there anything further?"

"Not that I can think of," answered the marquis, "excepting to ask you how my young friend's—Mr. Taro Goto—scheme of labor emigration is progressing?"

"Favorably, I believe," replied Tokiyori. "The Diet is assisting in preparing the people's mind for its reception."

Lord Yo-Akè shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. Taro is a most lucky young man—the idea will enrich him, even if it does not help the poor emigrant."

"Why should it not help the emigrant, father?"

"Because, my son, I have an idea that, as Mr. Taro purposes advancing the original amount for their passage to America, they are likely to remain heavily in Mr. Taro's debt for some time to come, in which event, of course, the laborers will be working in America for virtually what they can receive by laboring here at home. Well, well, he is a very clever young man, Mr. Taro, and as for the poor laborers, let us hope that—as the 'Foreigners' say—Heaven will temper the wind to the shorn lamb."

"I do not know that the 'Foreigners'' Scriptures have applied

that phrase to exactly the condition of affairs you depict," replied Tokiyori, smiling.

"Their application of phrases is most catholic, I think," replied Lord Yo-Akè; "their precepts very instructive—at times. I have an admiration, Tokiyori, for much in the so called Apocrypha—although I do not so greatly concur with the New Testament. It seems to me a mistake that the Christus should have founded the keynote of his life on a creed of such utter self abnegation and self-annihilation. I have thought he might have used the Romans most advantageously in his dealings with the Jews."

"His life was one of perfect sacrifice," commented Tokiyori; "a Hebrew Kuranosuke, as it were."

"Ah, yes; undoubtedly," answered the marquis. "Still I confess to a greater admiration for that most wise king, Solomon. There was a character, Tokiyori. Witness his most able handling of the labor question in his time. Without his policy of keeping his artisans at home the great temple would never have been built."

"Conditions were different then," dissented Tokiyori. "Israel was a much older nation than are we in our present form, and the demand for skilled labor at home greater."

"Ah, no," objected the marquis, "I must take issue with you there. I scarce think there can ever be a fundamental divergence of conditions on that all important topic. The times advance or retrograde, and with them we progress or decline, but the inherent principles of communal constitution remain the same. No corporate body may disassociate itself from its vertebra without subjecting the entire system to coma—and the laborer is undoubtedly the backbone of the nation. Europe, shortsightedly as I believe, regards this class as the least important of its natural fabrics, and has allowed it to emigrate in vast numbers, thus upbuilding an alien republic. The laborer is in essence the working bee of the hive, and every laborer lost to a nation I regard as a nation's distinct loss."

"The Diet has consented to assist Taro Goto because it believes that by an opportunity afforded to acquire modern agricultural methods abroad, they will ultimately improve agricultural conditions at home. Otherwise it is a matter of no importance as to whether Taro himself makes money or loses it."

"Looking at it through Mr. Taro's eyes," said Lord Yo-Akè, I admit it has all the appearance of being a most excellent idea, and one that should net him a very handsome percentage from his original outlay; still there is another point of view which, in their haste to comply with Mr. Taro's wishes, the Diet has evidently overlooked. I am sure you will agree with me that the withdrawal of our chief means of production must inevitably result in an increase of the cost of living and a partial paralysis of home industries, largely affecting our exports. This, because I doubt not that the great bulk of our laborers, lured by roseate dreams of receiving yen sixty per month, will flock to America. Now, putting aside these minor objections for the moment, I would direct your attention to the fact that under our proposed—and, I believe, accepted —plan of military organization, our laboring class is to become our second fighting line. Let us say, then—granting that there is the possibility of our one day expanding territorially, that the evacuation of an army of occupation of ours—speaking in a figurative sense for the purpose of illustration—is made compulsory from disputed, or acquired, territory. Under our present plans the places of such an army could at once be taken by our laborers, *each a skilled and trained soldier;* a system to which no possible adversary could offer any legal or logical objection. With the removal from our midst of our laboring class, all plans for such organization must, of course, be abandoned. I do not think the Diet can have studied this view of the question, or else it is to be presumed they would have been more chary of assisting Mr. Taro to empty the country of its producer and second fighting line."

"To have prevented Taro's plans—especially after they had been publicly advertised to the masses—would have raised up a tremendous opposition against the government at a time when we could least afford it." defended Tokiyori.

"No form of good government may prosper without a strong opposition," negatived Lord Yo-Akè. "Intensity of feeling against is one of the stepping stones by which we should walk onwards, my son. It is well, of course, to have friends, even if one has to use one's enemies in that capacity, but as to the voices of the masses they accomplish nothing. They but cry 'Death!' today for that at

which they cry 'Life!' tomorrow. They are blunt tools, to be used as such, my son."

"Must we never have relations with others excepting for the purpose of making them our tools?" asked Tokiyori.

"It is an inherent principle of life—both in its separate and collective form—that we must all be of use, each to the other," replied Lord Yo-Ake, suavely. "Remains but whether one is to be of use to one's kind, my son, or whether one's kind is to be of use to one. I presume," he added with the faintest suspicion of a smile, "that you are very often inclined to regard me as a most useless old man, yet, I assure you, it is unavoidable."

He remained thinking for some time after the departure of his son, and then calling a servant to bring his winter walking apparel, left the yashiki for a morning call upon his daughter-in-law.

On the way thither, he paused a moment, and smiled sardonically to himself.

"After all," he observed, half aloud, "I am very glad that Tokiyori was always kept in ignorance regarding Kiku-ko's feelings for Saito. I have felt that his ignorance might be useful some day."

He strolled on toward the besso, musing.

"Human nature," he observed to himself, "is much like a picturesque lake—extraneously. As we pass placidly across its calm surface we are enthralled by the beauty of its hidden life, the perfection of its flora and the coloring of its fauna. Its hidden dangers but tempt the swimmer into greater depths, and the touch of its seeming purity to our jaded senses is like the caressing of its own nymphs. So does it too often appear—cool, clear and inviting. But when some scientific delver, collecting a cup full of its liquid, spills but a drop of it beneath the lense of his microscope, he discovers there that which, if interesting, is most repellant in its crawliness."

He gained the besso gateway and turned to enter.

During the past week, Taro had sunk into a state of mental depression bordering on melancholia, greatly to the consternation of his uncle, nor could either remonstrances or cajolings on Goto's

part induce him to a more cheerful frame of mind. Realizing that Taro's present unhappiness was due to the impossibility of his being with Breath of Mukojima—always now otherwise engaged—poor Goto was overcome with the utmost remorse at the duplicity he had permitted himself to be inveigled into by what he regarded as the machinations of Tokiyori Yo-Akè. He heartily wished, at least a hundred times a day, that he had had nothing whatsoever to do with either the latter or The Jewel River, and determined to break off all connections with both in that respect as soon as should be politic. Moreover, he was somewhat ashamed of the role of old rouè he had been so successfully portraying recently, and devoutly wished that Tokiyori would suggest dispensing with his further company to such scenes of debauchery. This latter desire was occasioned by a missive just received from the subject of his thoughts, which he was but now perusing, which reminded the baron of his promise on the previous evening to again accompany him to The Jewel River the night after—which, of course, would be tonight. Goto could not deny the promise, for the very obvious reason that he could not remember what had transpired during the latter part of the evening in The Jewel River, and had spent the greater part of a headachy morning trying to solve just exactly how he had happened to find himself in his own bed on awakening, and his chances of having attained it unobserved by Taro.

He wondered, too, what loadstone in Ren-ko's eyes was compelling Tokiyori Yo-Akè toward a probable unpleasant scandal. Goto, as a man of the world, could very well understand a liaison between one situated even as was Tokiyori and an extremely pretty woman of whatever calling, but what he could not comprehend was the utter disregard for the outward observances in a man so placed. If, according to his way of thinking, Tokiyori Yo-Akè was so greatly impressed with Ikeda's daughter, why not effect her liberation from her articles to The Jewel River—a mere matter of money—and install her in some one of the outskirts of Tokyo? Or, if his feelings toward the girl were not strong enough to warrant such a proceeding, why these repeated visits to a locality where, sooner or later, he must become recognized, with an

inevitable resultant scandal? The more Goto thought over this the more puzzled regarding Tokiyori's motives he became, until, at last—urged thereto by the memory of the melancholy mien and dejected mood of the despondent Taro—he made up his mind that come what might he would wash his hands of the whole affair.

Toward this latter consummation, fate—re-incarnated for the purpose in Lord Asano Yo-Akè—saved Goto further worry and unpleasantness. It was at the end of the fortnight following his first dinner at The Jewel River with Tokiyori—a fortnight during which that abode had had the pleasure of thrice providing for him, in company with the latter, with Ren-ko to entertain them—that he received simultaneously two letters, one from Tokiyori requesting his company for the usual Yoshiwara jaunt, and one from Lord Yo-Akè requesting his presence to Shima at dinner the same evening. Goto at once accepted the marquis' invitation, and then, after dispatching his regrets to Tokiyori, made preparations for what he considered the asceticism of Shima cookery by consuming a dish of eels and a bottle of sakè on his way thither.

At the same hour Tokiyori was speeding toward the O-mon of the Flower Quarter, secure now in the knowledge that his visits no longer aroused a suspicion as to their intent in Ren-ko's bosom. In a sense he found this new dangerous game that he was hazarding not without unusual fascination—a fascination that increased like an opiate with each fresh recurrence to it. At first he had viewed the matter of his proposed visits to The Jewel River with dread, tempered strongly with absolute fear as to the outcome, accepting it perforce as the only alternative to worse things, but, gradually, as the quality of Ren-ko's intellect became unfolded to him, and as he found his intended victim by no means the meek lamb that he, like a ravenous wolf, was set to devour, an admiration for her mentality, that taxed his own to the utmost, took possession of him, and he came to look forward to each coming visit with a positive longing. Perhaps this sort of mental gambling was what he most needed—an intellectual hypodermic that could arouse his keenest perception and most vivid enthusiasm—for it stimulated him to more desperate efforts than he would otherwise have dared venture. Also he was not sorry that Goto's company

was to be dispensed with, for while the jovial baron invariably drank himself into a state of pleasurable drowsiness each night, shortly after the final retirement of the dancing maids, he felt there would be less restraint when relieved of the baron's presence. In fact Goto, had he but known it, so far from being a wished-for companion by Tokiyori, was secretly regarded more in the light of a necessary evil.

In Ren-ko's case, it is doubtful if she was quite aware of the full extent of her feelings at this time toward this new friend, Takè san. To her he was an anomaly that no deductions collected from recent knowledge of the genus man seemed able to solve. From the outset she had been convinced that he was not as others of her acquaintance, and yet she could assign no definite niche in humanity that he appeared as made to fill. This, naturally, developed her feminine interest to the full, and for some time she had regarded him with a veiled mistrust, until, their friendship ripening, she began to build secret little air castles about herself and Takè—little dreams of roses and gold, of jade landscapes and silver waterfalls—dear, unconscious Eutopias of love, found too often, alas! only in our twilight musings. Takè had found the one weak spot in her invulnerability—her intellectuality—and on this he had played as adroitly as a harper on the most delicate instrument. Her materiality she could have had flattered as often as there were hours in the day; the craving of her mentality for recognition Takè alone seemed capable of answering. Since the night of his first visit to her, he had not again sought to ingratiate himself by a display of recklessness or bon vivantry, but had instead painted life for her in aspects so somber and so rose tinted, with such depth of thought, epigram, wit or irony, that he had captivated the best of Ren-ko—her mind—and chained it to almost his bidding.

It was dark, for day had faded into afterglow, afterglow into a thin, purplish twilight, and twilight into a closed-in chamber, even as a black drape might be let down to hide an andon in an adjoining apartment. Ren-ko stood, as was often her custom, upon the upper balcony of The Jewel River, looking down upon the constant little old umbrella man and the ever-changing panorama

of curious humans. February was drawing to the end of its visit, but its snow remained, like some belated guest to the Flower Quarter, warning that March would enter upon its moon-rule prepared to keep up its time-honored reputation. Ren-ko watched the throngs with an indifference born of familiarity, until she espied a 'ricksha detach itself from the congesting traffic and turn sharply down the Street of the Sorrow-Love. Then she gave a faint, happy little sigh, for—although she could not see the figure beneath the 'ricksha hood—her woman's instinct had bidden her heart quicken its throbbing, and Ren-ko knew.

A moment longer she lingered on the balcony dreaming such opal dreams—wild thoughts of putting all this life far, far behind her—of forgetting the sights and drone of the Nightless Street in some flower-clad besso near the northern headlands, where the waves would hum and roar beneath pure, uncovered skies, and where rippling padi would undulate to the background of mountain walls, inringed by clumps of feathery bamboo, and tinted with the raw, inburnt maple.

It thrilled, but did not surprise her, when a moment later a voice called that "Miss Breath of Mukojima was requested to bestow her company upon a diner in the second room from across the Bridge of Love."

XVI

THE BIRD OF TIME IS WINGING

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

TORN by the harpy of unrequited affection, Taro at that same hour was hastening his 'ricksha toward the Street of the Sorrow-Love, and so to the rear exit of The Jewel River, when he espied Saito in another vehicle just ahead of him, evidently journeying in the same direction. Love sent to Taro wings of desire, but the

'ricksha man—evidently immune to the little god—continued on the same unvarying pace despite curses and entreaties. He naturally concluded that Saito had the same destination in view—The Jewel River—and the same object of seeking it—Breath of Mukojima. Just then a slight congestion of traffic was occasioned by the blunder of some peddler's cart, necessitating a stoppage of all vehicles from behind Saito's 'ricksha, whereby Taro arrived finally at The Jewel River in time to see Breath of Mukojima crossing the Bridge of Love toward a room, where—so he immediately conjectured—Saito must be awaiting her. In this presumption he verified in his own person the accusation so often made against this same love, for as a matter of fact Saito was at that precise moment in Saburo Ikeda's room, awaiting the coming of that worthy, and Ren-ko entering to the presence of Takè san. Poor Taro!

He ordered a room for the following evening and then left The Jewel River in a state of perturbation, for the morrow was to be his last day in Tokyo. At the exit to the houses he entered his 'ricksha, directing the runner to convey him to Tokiyori's besso, for he had some final matters concerning the Nippon Land and Emigration Company's exportation of laborers to put before the Diet, and wished them presented through his friend.

Arrived there he was informed by Kiku-ko that Tokiyori was absent on business and not expected home until quite late that night, so lingered but a moment to make his farewells to his friend's wife. Throughout his call his manner was so gloomy and reminiscent of blighted hopes and happiness that Kiku-ko—who, because of his intimacy with Tokiyori, had come to know him fairly well during his stay in Tokyo—rallied him upon his moody preoccupation. "You are as sad as a broken-hearted lover," she said, jestingly.

"My heart is broken!" sighed poor Taro. "How can I laugh? I feel more inclined to commit seppuku."

Kiku-ko repressed a smile with difficulty, for ancient rites and modern clothing were ludicrously incongruous. Also Taro's misery had about it a suggestion of the extreme humor depicted in the throes of toothache—when seen in others.

"How can you consider such dreadful things when I understand your Nippon Land and Emigration Company is such a success?" she asked.

"Curse the Nippon Land and Emigration Company!" muttered Taro, hollowly. "My heart is shattered in a thousand fragments, countess. I shall never know happiness again."

"But who has been so cruel?" asked Kiku-ko, sympathetically.

Taro was longing for just some such chance to recount the agonies of a blasted life.

"You may have heard," said he, "that Saburo Ikeda—once Lord Ikeda of the Baka-fu, you know—has a most beauteous and most heartless daughter—no, no, I don't quite mean that; she is as sweet and good as the cherry petals for whom she is named. The old scoundrel sold her to a house in the Yoshiwara—The Jewel River—and I have come to love her with all my heart."

"Can you not effect her liberation?" inquired Kiku-ko.

"Oh, yes," said he, "that would no doubt be fairly easy, for as a geisha her indentures would probably not be excessive. It is not that that troubles me, but the fact that Saito of Satsuma is her evident preference."

Kiku-ko sat up suddenly very straight.

"Saito of Satsuma!" she repeated.

Taro nodded, too engrossed upon his own misery to note her sudden change of attitude.

"He's with her always," he went on; "has been her constant visitor for the past two months. What she can see in the fellow is beyond me. A more conceited man I never saw. Why he—Oh, but what's the use of talking!"

He sat in silence brooding for a few moments, during which Kiku-ko also pondered over what she had just learned. Finally Taro arose to take his leave.

"Goodbye, countess," he said. "I leave for Yokohama the day after tomorrow, bound for America. I shall see your husband at his offices before I go. Please say farewell to your little daughter for me. I shall send her some small remembrance from America. You have all been most kind to me—goodbye."

For a long time after Taro's departure Kiku-ko sat by the hibat-

chi, wrapt in thought. Finally the sound of Aysia and her nurse returning from Shima aroused her. She arose quietly to welcome her little daughter, and Aysia noted that there were traces of tears in her mother's eyes.

Meanwhile Saito had been awaiting the coming of Ikeda in the room used by the conspirators as a meeting place. Growing impatient at last, he slid the shoji to make his exit, when he saw Ren-ko emerging from the room across the balcony, and a moment afterwards Tokiyori Yo-Akè retiring toward the rear stairway. One glance was sufficient; Saito closed the shoji and awaited the coming of Ren-ko.

As she entered he came straight to the subject of her recent visitor.

"Whom were you with just now?" he asked.

"A gentleman from the north, by the name of Takè san," she replied, slightly surprised.

"From the north?" laughed Saito, sneeringly. "What part of the north?"

"Somewhere near Sendai, I think," she answered, innocently. "Why?"

"Northern men are of a dangerous and nameless breed," he replied with a meaning intonation.

"Not Mr. Takè," she affirmed, and with such a tone and look that Saito became at once convinced of the existing state of affairs.

"Do you mean to tell me that the fellow has been making love to you?" he asked, rudely, because of his sudden apprehension.

"I mean to tell you nothing when you assume that tone," she answered, now thoroughly angry. "What right have you to question me on such a subject?"

"The right of wishing to prevent your ruining yourself, and us, before it is too late," said he.

Ren-ko opened her eyes wide.

"You are speaking without any knowledge of your subject," said she. "I was about to tell you—when you took the words out

of my mouth—that Mr. Takè is in the utmost sympathy with our plans, and ready to join us at a moment's notice."

"He told you that!" exclaimed Saito, bitterly, "and you, I suppose, were fool enough to credit it."

"Why should I not?" she asked, defiantly.

"Because," said he, slowly, "this man who has evidently made such convincing love to you—who has won your affections, confidence and the knowledge of our plans from you—who is so anxious to join sides with us—pah!" he broke off in a sudden whirl of fury. "Do you know what you have done, girl? Do you know who it is to whom you have confided everything you should have held sacred? For whom it is you have made a fool of yourself and a proclaimed traitor of your father and myself and a score of others—you the worse traitor of all? Well, your Mister Takè of the North, near Sendai, happens to be one whom I know intimately—Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of Moto and Shima, a member of the Imperial Diet."

XVII

AH! THE PASSIVE LIP I KISS'D!

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

For the moment Ren-ko was too stunned at the receipt of this intelligence to reply. Granting the truth of what Saito had just said, it was not of the probable failure of her father's plans, nor the resultant doom of her own life, that she was thinking. She cared nothing for the fact that he—if he were such—this Takè—

Tokiyori Yo-Akè—had won from her, knowledge concerning the conspiracy she was set to guard, but that he had played upon her feelings, and tricked her into an admission of love for him—an unreserved admission that he was doubtless then laughing at—was gall and wormwood to her womanly indignation. Then the memory of the man—as she knew him—came back to her, telepathically, to sweep aside all her doubts and fears.

"You are wrong," said she to Saito, proudly. "You are doubtless sincere in your belief, but you are misinformed. Such a man as you describe would be a shameless villain. Mr. Takè is a gentleman of Nippon."

Her face was suffused with a great belief in this man whose guilt she refused to credit. Saito regarded her a moment, wondering at the utter wilful unreasonableness of her sex. Then, slowly and quietly, he proceeded to convince her of the truth.

"Perhaps I am," said he at last, "for doubtless Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè—a man of family ties—would scarce come a-seeking pleasures or information in the Yoshiwara. I believe you knew his wife once—the Countess Kiku-ko; yet, if my memory serves me correctly, you have never seen him. Let me describe him to you—for I know him well—so that you may judge of his similarity to your Mr. Takè of the North, near Sendai."

He drew nearer, fixing her unflinchingly with his eye, and proceeded to tear her credence in this man into shreds, logically, convincingly, irresistibly.

"Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè," he continued, quietly, " is an inveterate foe to old Nippon because of his infatuation for 'Foreign' customs and modes, on which account he is most anti-Japanese in thought and action. In years he is about mine own age—say nearing forty. In appearance he is very slightly—poorly—formed; studious, yet chimerical; grave, yet chivalrous. He stoops slightly, and both gesture and voice are as gentle as a woman's. His features are unhandsome, high forheaded, with a rounded full eye, and—oh, yes, I almost forgot to add that he has a defect in his walk, a limp occasioned by a wound received from a night attack of the Baka-fu troops in Yedo. I think that describes Tokiyori Yo-Akè to the best of my poor powers."

She listened intently during his picture of Tokiyori, comparing it point by point with the man whom she had come to love as Takè san. It coincided, that is there were points of inexplainable coincidences of likeness—the gentle voice, the effeminate gestures —had she not often remarked to herself this in particular as she served him with tea and cakes? But when Saito came to the defect in his walk, all lingering doubt as to the identity of Takè was removed from Ren-ko's mind; the coincidences were too numerous for refutation.

"And how much," concluded Saito, "have you told this friend of yours—this Mister Takè of the North, Sendai way—of our intentions and hopes?"

"I have told him nothing—as yet—whereby he may harm us," she answered, steadily. "I might have tomorrow night, when he again visits me—but, in any case, I have told him nothing. You may believe me. But, had I told him everything, it would be of no avail to him now."

"Why?" he asked, surprised in his turn.

"Because," she answered, slowly and thoughtfully, "whether Takè san or Tokiyori Yo-Akè, he will be one of our party before a second sun has risen."

She left him, entering her own room adjoining, through the fusima that separated it from the conspirators' apartment, while Saito, frankly perplexed at this sudden change of mood, left The Jewel River to consider this fresh danger that had arisen.

Secure in the privacy of her room, Ren-ko dropped upon the mats, sobbing to herself the full shame and agony of her betrayed love. Presently, the calmer moments succeeding the storm, she began step by step to review her acquaintance with Takè san —for so she still preferred to designate him to herself.

From wondering at the ease with which he had been enabled to entrap her—for, despite her statement to Saito, Takè had gained from her an admission that she would not be free from Tanaka's control until her father and his friends had succeeded in their reestablishment, denied them by the present government—she passed into a state of still further wonder at his powers as an actor, his vivid portrayal of an assumed part. How had he so easily

won her love? Not by virtue of appearance certainly, nor by lavish display of wealth—two adjuncts most effective into the good graces of woman, for while he had been carelessly generous in the matter of his expenditures, he had made no attempt to dazzle her with the wealth she now knew to be his. What then, she asked herself over and over again, was it about him that had so attracted her? Ah, yes, his thoughts—given such marvelous expression to. Strange that one should be gifted with the power of divinely inspired utterances but so to misuse them!—to garb his real self with a cloak of lies! Then—unaccountably, bringing with it a world of comfort—the thought came to Ren-ko that Saito had been mistaken after all, not as to Takè's identity, but as to the purpose of his visits to The Jewel River. True, he might politically be an enemy to her people and their plans, and an important member of the government that had ousted her father and his friends from any place in it; yet this gave no reason for the supposition that he had deliberately sought her acquaintance as a spy. She hugged this new hope to her breast, and if a doubt of his ascribed intentions arose, she easily confronted and defeated it with a thousand reasons why such could not be so. His assumption of another name was most feasible of explanation, and she recalled gladly that while he might appear—by such stories as that of his tai, for instance—to have sought to lead her into an avowal of her father's plans, he had made no effort, when he well might, to force her confidence, nor play upon her feelings so as to gain his desire—if such it were. Ren-ko loved Takè, simply and obviously, and as with such natures as her's, love was all.

She recalled a previous conversation with him, in which she had asked him for a definition of love, and he had answered her that it was life, embracing all—immortality—endless, unslayable. She had asked him if death, that grim spectre that hovers even through the thoughts of lovers, could not find a sting to kill it, and he had told her that to those who loved there was no death possible. Death was but a shadow, falling across the landscape of life, and growing longer and longer until finally it became merged in the morrow. And where it fell on the morrow it would fall on the million morrows to come; it was but the short night that intervened.

She remembered that she had asked him what would become of the shadow if the sun failed to appear on that morrow, and he had laughed softly, taking her hand in his, and telling her that a poet would need no eyes to see the visions of which he wrote. This shadow would fall just the same, it was but doubting eyes that required the sun as evidence.

She believed this—and because of it believed in him. Was she a doubter to require a sun to show her love to her—to think that love slain because a short night was intervening?

She crossed to a shoji that gave out over the Nightless Street, and slid it that the crisp night air might enter and fan her thought-heated brow. About her a great world of sin and evil surged and lurched in the wickedness of its life, but overhead the stars shone pure and bright. The lanterns of the Flower Quarter required constant attention, their little lamps re-burnishing and filling, their wicks re-trimming. Those other lanterns in the sky overhead needed naught, but shone as brightly as though they had been lit and hung by some Hand. When they became invisible to mortal eye it was but because a passing cloud obscured them, the stars were still in their places and still shining. Behind them, somewhere, was the great sun that made light and shadow—that, too, was still shining, obstructed but by the passage of the night, a night whose fullest complement of hours could scarce equal half of their nycthemeron. Where was her love?

She raised her face to the stars, crying softly above the mocking jollity of The Jewel River revelers.

"He loves me! He loves me!"

XVIII

THREAD-BARE PENITENCE

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

It was the early afternoon of the following day. In the yashiki of his Mukojima besso, Goto was protesting to Taro vehemently at a suggestion from the latter that they should make one night of it at The Jewel River before the start for Yokohama on the morrow. Taro, secretly in the hope of seeing Ren-ko for one last time,

had been urging this to his uncle for the past half hour, and the baron had as insistently been negativing the idea.

His recent escapades at The Jewel River, in the company of Tokiyori, had resulted for Goto in an attack of gout, as he had predicted, and each sharp twinge now served to prick his conscience as well. He was determined that, hereafter, no earthly powers of suasion should lure him from the paths of sobriety and rectitude. Besides it was not dignified for a personage of his prominence to be frequenting such places, and, moreover, his foot hurt him excessively.

"'Clapping can not be done with one hand'," he expostulated to Taro, when the latter had again renewed his attack. "My honorable foot is so wretchedly annoying that I can scarcely walk."

"But, uncle," interjected Taro, plaintively, "think, this is our last night together for some time."

Goto shifted in his seat, uneasily.

"I think this daughter of Ikeda's has bewitched you young fellows," he answered testily, drawing up his foot sharply at a sudden twinge. "Why need you hurry back to America, Taro? There must be others in the Company who can take these trips in your place, and I am getting to be an old fellow who will be lonely without you."

"It is absolutely imperative that I journey to America, as you must realize, uncle," replied Taro, "because, owing to an increase in applications for labor transportation to that country, arrangements must be entered into there for a more extended field of placing our intended emigrants. Moreover, we have pledged ourselves to the Diet to secure, if possible, farming lands for these emigrants in California, all of which will require my personal supervision."

"Well, well," grumbled Goto, "I suppose you are right, nephew. Nevertheless, I shall be very lonely after you are gone."

He relapsed into silence, broken only by occasional "ouches" and anathemas at the pain in his foot, while Taro awaited a more favorable opportunity of again broaching the subject of The Jewel River. Finally, Goto observed:

"Why not forego this Yoshiwara project of yours for tonight,

Taro, and let us spend our last evening together peaceably at home? I have some very good sakè, and I daresay our cook can manage something palatable for us."

"I thought the 'Foreign' doctor had forbidden you sakè until you have recovered from this attack of gout," remarked Taro.

The baron moved about uneasily once more.

"'There is more danger in the knife of a doctor than in the fiercest storms of winter'," he defended. "The 'Foreign' doctor told me that if I would give up my sakè I would greatly lengthen my days. I have tried it for two days now, and I must say, Taro, they are the longest days I ever remember to have spent. I thought they would never end."

"Well, uncle," affirmed Taro, "at all events the 'Foreign' doctor has not forbidden your visiting the Yoshiwara with your nephew. I will warrant that if you but accompany me your foot will not trouble you as much as it does now, and that the evening will pass far more pleasantly to you than shut up in this room with the constant memory of your pain for a companion. As for me, I must attend The Jewel River a few moments in any case, for, while there yesterday evening, I ordered a room for us—the same room we have always used—and geisha and hokan. The cooks have my orders to prepare eels with sancho, after our custom in the north, and there is to be a new 'Foreign' dish—a piece de resistance, called paté de foi grâs—that is worthy a place on the Mikado's table. It will be a feast fit only for kings, uncle, sparkling with wit, wine and pretty women—an evening to remember for many a long year to come, with mirth and joy our only guests at the festive board! Surely, uncle, you will not leave it for me to partake of this alone?"

As usual, the epicurean picture proved too great a temptation for Goto.

"By Uji-no-mitama!" he vociferated; "I believe the boy is right! 'The moping owl complains away its rest.' That 'Foreign' doctor is a fool. Order 'rickshas then, nephew, while I prepare my toilet."

Later that afternoon Tokiyori stood in the great library of Shima, about to take his departure from his father's presence.

"I am assured," said he to Lord Yo-Akè, "that Ikeda's conspiracy has its foundation in a plot to re-establish the old order of Tokugawa times; that he has succeeded in attracting many like himself—and with much more powerful connections in the present règime, in many cases—to his cause, and that Saito is the head and soul of the military part of the organization. Their plans are maturing rapidly and there is a general hope among them of bringing matters to an issue before the summer months."

"We can but wait, and watch," answered Lord Yo-Akè. "Your part has been well done, my son. You have tricked this girl most skilfully."

"Yes," answered Tokiyori, with unusual bitterness, "that is just what I am—what I have been made to be—a trickster, a forger of sacred words, a liar. I go now to fresh victories—sayonara."

Lord Yo-Akè watched him as he left the room.

"After all," he mused, "our vaunted system of marriage is subservient to many translations, any one of all depending merely on the translator. It is called a union—of what? Rather, to me, its material state is simply an affining of molecular atoms; its intellectual communion the ventriloquism of souls. But Love? Ah, Love! what place have you—or ever had—in marriage? Your presence therein is just as likely to prove conspicuous by its absence as otherwise; yet you are the life of the world, for without you there would be no universe—no Nippon—no Yo-Akè. Love!"

He stood gazing into the shrine to his dead wife, until the sound of the o-mon shutting to, told him that his son had left the castle.

Much later that afternoon Saito called at the Shiba besso. He was anxious to ascertain, unsuspected, something of Tokiyori's movements, and it was two days since he had seen Kiku-ko—an unusual remissness on his part, latterly. At the entrance he was met by Kiku-ko herself, who conducted him into the guest chamber.

"I wanted this opportunity," said she, "to speak to you—please hear me out before you interrupt."

She was standing before him, very straight and determined, so

that she seemed to Saito to have acquired a hitherto unknown dignity.

"I have listened to you for some years," she went on, "because I believed you the one true, unchanging thing in this rapidly changing country of ours. It seemed to me that you alone stood for our Bushido—all that was most honorable in our life. Now I see that I was wrong, both in my estimate of you and of that code for which you stood. It is but a brilliant cloak, hiding the tawdriness beneath; why should I expect its wearer to be otherwise? I have suffered for the falsity of my belief, and I suffer again in saying this; but now I know that there is neither truth nor honor longer in the old Nippon."

"I do not understand you," said he when at last he was given the opportunity to defend himself.

"No," she replied, "I hardly expected that you would. You belong to that world—past now, thank the gods!—to whom there was virtue or chastity in naught but the sword. Do you think a woman whose eyes have been opened could again revert to such a state?"

"Revert to what state?" he asked, still bewildered.

"To the state—for instance—to which you, and others, have sentenced a woman of your own caste—the daughter of the once Lord Ikeda of the Baka-fu, to be more explicit."

"And what has that to do with us, Kiku-ko?" said he.

"I refer you for the answer to your—friend? at The Jewel River," she replied. "Sayonara."

With a bow she left him, and Saito, in a now ugly frame of mind, stalked from the house to his awaiting 'ricksha without. As he proceeded in it toward the city, a sudden thought came to him.

"By the gods!" he exclaimed half aloud, "I believe she loves him! I believe she loves him!"

He pondered a moment.

"Ho, there, runner!" he called sharply to his 'ricksha man, "convey me as quickly as possible to the houses of The Jewel River, on the Nightless Street of the Flower Quarter."

XIX

IDOLS OF LOVE

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE baron and Taro having secured the sole remaining entertainment chamber at The Jewel River that night, Ren-ko gave orders that Takè's dinner should be served in her own room, whither she awaited him. The day following a sleepless night, occasioned by Saito's warning against Tokiyori, had found her again fraught

with doubts regarding him, and while she was now enabled to meet these in a vein of calmer reasoning, she prepared for a possible worst by an antidote of which she had thought. If, she reasoned, Takè were innocent, the foresight could do not the slightest harm; or if otherwise, she would have at hand a powerful weapon of protection for herself and father.

Kneeling before a small writing table, she unrolled a scroll to its full length, so that it covered the table top. In the right-hand margin of this was a statement contained in a few closely written characters in perpendicular lines, followed by a score of signatures and seals covering nearly one half the paper. She studied these for some time, then clapped her hands thrice.

When the maid answered the summons, she instructed her to bring a bowl of boiled rice. As the servant withdrew, she carefully rolled the scroll toward its under side, stopping when was left to view but the unwritten portion of the paper. Presently the maid returned with the rice, and placing it by her mistress, asked if she required anything further. Ren-ko ordered tea and cakes for two, then turned to her task.

Crushing a grain of the rice against the inside of the bowl with her forefinger, she lightly touched the roll where she held it between finger and thumb of the other hand, thus glueing it. Then she rolled up the remainder and, lifting her ink-case from the floor onto the table, laid the scroll in readiness beside it.

Her task completed to her satisfaction, she arose, and crossing the room to the hibatchi, placed her small iron kettle on the rest over its hot coals, and, setting her cushion beside it, was now ready for her visitor. Shortly after the maid entered and deposited a tea tray close to her mistress, laying another cushion on the opposite side of the hibatchi. Then, gathering up the bowl of rice, she withdrew just as the voice of an attendant was heard ushering a guest toward the room. A moment later the shoji slid admitting Takè san.

He advanced quickly to her side, and after greeting her warmly, remarked on her room.

"How pretty this apartment is," he observed.

"Ah, yes," she answered, smiling up happily at him. "Of course

you have never seen it before. All the other chambers were engaged for the evening, so I thought to make shift to entertain you in my poor apartment."

"It is an unexpected, and therefore doubly appreciated, pleasure," he replied, settling himself upon the cushion laid for him.

Her room was separated from the one adjoining—used by her father and his associates of the conspiracy—by fusima depicting a great cherry tree in full bloom, blown by a wind so that its petals were falling in showers to form a thick snow-like carpet. Intermingled with the falling blossoms was a swarm of exquisitely tinted butterflies; two sides of the room were enclosed by shoji. Besides the writing table, hibatchi, tea service, and her *ko-tansu* of dull wood with fantastic bronze-wrought clasps upon its drawers and little doors, there was but the *toko-no-ma,* containing a dainty little kakemono of bird life, and—oddly—a sword rack on which reposed two weapons that had evidently, from make and housings, belonged once to some noble or samurai of the wealthier class. Ren-ko, busying herself with the tea service, explained the presence of these latter laughingly to Takè.

"They are my father's," said she, "who treasures them greatly, although he can not, of course, wear them under the present regulations."

She served him his tea, noting as he received it the effeminacy of gesture of which Saito had spoken, and Takè, draining the cup of its contents, passed it to her for re-filling.

Just then sounds of revelry from across "the Bridge of Love" became audible, distinguishable among them the voice of Goto.

"I understand now," smiled Takè, "why my usual apartment was let this evening. It seems my friend, the baron, is entertaining again tonight."

"A farewell dinner, I believe, to his nephew, Mr. Taro Goto, who leaves for America tomorrow," explained Ren-ko.

"Is he one of your friends, Flower Heart?" asked Takè, in joking vein.

"He was," she answered, "until he decided not to be."

"Ah! I perceive," smiled Takè. "Well, he will doubtless be very rich some day," he added, jestingly.

"That is naught to me," she replied, indifferently.

"Do not all women love riches?" he asked.

"I prefer greatness," she answered, simply.

"Well, are not riches greatness?" he queried, still in the same tone of light banter.

"Indeed no," she affirmed without hesitancy. "A rich man is often mistaken for a great one by the world because of what his wealth can buy, but to me greatness consists rather in the power of giving."

"Then how would you define a great man, my Soul of the Blossoms?"

"A great man," she answered, slowly and thoughtfully, "is one who, recking nothing of himself, labors above all for the good of humanity, no matter what his sphere of work may be; that alone is what constitutes greatness, I think. Such a one might not acquire much worldly wealth, because his mind would be given to the advancement of others rather than to his own interests.

"Yet there are said to be rich men who work for the good of humanity," he objected.

"Yes, after they have worn out the best in their lives accumulating for themselves," she agreed.

"Then you think our friend, Taro, will never be great?"

"He will probably be wealthy some day," she replied, "and in the world's eyes that embraces everything. I know his plans, but cannot see any greatness in a work destined toward the ultimate ruin of his country."

He evinced a sudden deep interest.

"The ruin of the country?" he asked. "How can that be?"

"How can it not be?" she answered. "Mr. Taro is attempting, and successfully according to report, to instigate a desire for emigration in his countrymen by the offer of greater prosperity. Think you that our people will ever care to return to their native fare after tasting this dish he is providing for them? Soon we should be a race of neither Orientals nor Occidentals, but, like your fish, half dolphin, half tai. Where then would be our vaunted oneness of national ambition, or love of country? It would be the foreword of the decline and fall of Nippon."

"That would appear to settle the claims of our friend, Taro Goto, to greatness," he laughed, "and so a rival is removed from my list. Yet, I confess to fears for myself; your estimate of greatness seems so humanly unattainable."

"I think that, given the heart for such work," she differed, "greatness is more easily attainable than mere money. The brain lacks the spontaneity of the heart, and what is an effort to the one would be but a pleasure to the other. Yet, mere ostensible success does not necessarily stamp the worker as great, any more than the acquisition of mere wealth does. I know of one, now, who is I think the nearest human attribute of greatness, yet I doubt that he has ever experienced one proclaimed success of his efforts."

"Excepting that of apparently winning your encomium," he jested. "Would that I were he!"

"Oh, you *are* in many ways," she answered, quickly. "I often think you very similar in character to my hero—Tokiyori Yo-Akè."

She watched him closely as she spoke, and it added to her approval of him that he betrayed no consciousness of her inuendo.

"I would, Soul of Mine," said he, lightly, "that I could be to you what this Tokiyori Yo-Akè seems."

There was a note of deep sincerity in his voice despite the lithesome manner of speaking, unmistakable to the woman whose senses were strained to his every mood.

"You are," said she, simply; "I thank the gods!"

He regarded her with one swift, keen glance, and then gave a short laugh.

"You flatter me," he replied.

"Not if you are what I believe you to be," she answered. And then, before he had time for further comment—

"Have you ever seen a lake of muddy water, into which a pure stream flows," she asked, "and noted the beauty of the clear liquid where it touches? We of the Flower Quarter are like so many turbid ponds: purity there is among us—for we are women—yet the constant stirring of the mud obscures all else. When, from the high mountains, a clear stream flows to us—such as, for

instance, this Tokiyori Yo-Akè—is it any wonder that it leaves an impress? We know his efforts in the Diet on our behalf, they are common talk among us, and whatever his lack of success regarding this may be to the public, I think a little ihai is preserved in every woman's heart here to enshrine his name in."

She touched his hand timidly with her own shapely, tapering fingers—a touch that thrilled him.

"Oh, Tokiyori, Tokiyori," she laughed, softly. "Could you not see through my little play? Forgive me the deception, dearest heart. You think it strange that I know you? Yet, if you would but stop to consider, you would perceive that I could scarcely have failed to identify you. I was a guest at your besso on the night of the ronin attack upon the old embassies, and you still carry the effects of the wound you received then. Then, too, you have been the subject of especial vituperation in the Yoshiwara because of your project against the established practices here, and naturally your personality has undergone much discussion among us."

In a second he realized the impracticability of an attempted denial of his identity, and decided that his best chance of allaying her suspicions would be in an acceptable explanation of his incognito.

"You are right," said he, quietly. "I would have told you all the truth, eventually, but the deception was imperative just now. It is not without danger, in the present state of feeling against me by the house owners here, that I pay my visits to you, and, as you must realize, I could not afford to risk the fact of these visits becoming public property. But one other—beside yourself—knows of them—my friend, Baron Goto."

"Why have you sought me?" she asked.

"By accident at first, and afterwards—for love."

"I know that you have come to me with words of love," said she, "which I have accepted with my woman's impulsiveness. I believed those words as sincere as is my love for you. Were they?"

"By that love, I swear it."

"And I too swear the same," she replied. "In any case there can be no shame in such a confession from me, for were I to you but a light love, or the one whose soul was created a counterpart of

yours, my love is true—and in truth there can be no shame. You swear your words were true; and I recall how often you promised to take me away from this—was that the truth, also?"

"Yes," he answered, "it was."

Suddenly she buried her face in her hands, shaking convulsively.

"Oh, take me away from this!" she sobbed. "Oh, take me away!"

Her plea was as anguished as that of one drowning.

"I will," he replied, "on my honor. But you must allow me time to make arrangements. It is superfluous, surely, for me to tell you that any whisper of this would ruin me?"

Exactly what he said, he meant. He knew that her love was everything to him, and, had less pended on himself—both as regarded his country and his family—he would have cast aside the rôle he was assuming and told her the whole truth. In a flash it came to him, as never before, what a series of sacrifices his lot in life had predestined him to, and, worst of all, the sacrifices were entailed on all others, seemingly, who came into close contact with himself. First Kiku-ko—he understood the sacrifice of her loveless marriage, despite his supposed ignorance, regarding her secret attitude for Saito—and now this woman—nay, girl—who alone had come deepest into his life.

Suddenly she removed her hands from her face, and clutched his cheeks between them, her eyes fairly burning into his own.

"Let me look into your eyes," said she, "into the well of your life, for I know *they* can reveal naught but the purity of you. I care not what your lips may utter, it is in the depths of your eyes that I shall see, and *know*. I do not seek to embarrass your position, rather I would help you. I could not be selfish, my Takè, and be what I long to—your helpmeet; the moisture-gathering clouds blot out the dawn. I would be the clear atmosphere that intensifies the glory of the sun. Listen, O Heart of Mine!

"A new dawn has broken for Japan, you believe; let it dawn for us, too. The mists are clearing away before your radiance, my beautiful sun, and I would not be that which obstructs your light, for well I know it must shine upon our earth through no murkiness, no befogging air. See, how I may be of help to you. Since

first I knew you, my Tokiyori—my Takè—I felt that to be worthy of you I must learn with the comprehension of man. Naught else would appeal to you, that I understood, even on that night of our first meeting, when you sought to blind me with your assumed intoxication—as though such as you would descend to such coarseness, soul of my soul! And so I thought—oh, so earnestly!—and studied when chance permitted, asking questions of all who could enlighten me, neglecting no littlest piece of knowledge. I grasped each opportunity possible to entertain at the banquets of important officials, until I began to know something of the undercurrents of our national existence. Gradually I pieced those gleanings together into one whole garment, that I might some day bring it to you as my little offering to the shrine of our love. Dear heart, I have accepted repugnant attentions to learn for you, and I have learned—secrets of state that you believed inviolately guarded, plans of men sitting with you on the Diet that you would not dream existed—trust a woman to acquire what she desires, when aided by the sakè cup."

She arose, superb in her wonderful perfection of beauty, and stretched her arms forth, her great eyes liquid with the loveliness of her adoration.

"I learned all this," said she, "because first I had learned love. Love that I hoped would make me, not the mistress to a lover, the bed companion to a great lord—but the consort to a king!"

He was watching her every action, her every gesture, noting with all that was in him her every word, her every inflexion, enthralled. Her soul was open to his sight, unfolding like the timid petals of a flower. The veil of her life fell slowly before his eyes, till the shrine was bereft of its coverings, and naught stood between them but the great naked flame of truth and love—not that feeble, animal misnomer of the human race, but a love so all-loving that it sought but the creation and perfection of itself, unselfish, all-giving. He entered—through the thought veil of her life—and, for the gift-moment, affined by the gods, they trod the pure ether above the earth; then, like the black, downward rush of falling waters, his trust spake into his ear, quietly, insistently, irresistibly. He tried to brush it aside, but it whispered to him that

infidelity to it would be infidelity to her as well. Honor must descend to a material villainy to beget itself—Jesuitical, yet awe-inspiring in the hopeless sacrifice of its life for its life.

He was shown the opportunity afforded by her plea to exact information, and quickly sought to take advantage of it.

"You have said that you would be my help," said he; "would you be so now?"

"Yes," she answered, simply.

He hesitated, and then decided to risk all on a single throw of the dice, fearing that the opportunity might not occur again, and believing that her present sentiments could be played upon.

"There are," said he, "frequent meetings here between your father, Lord Saito, and certain daimios of the Tokugawa times. Their motives I know, but the names of those taking part in this conspiracy and the time set for its consummation are necessary to that dawn of which you spoke—nay, they are the very obstructing fog that will prevent it. As you love me—as your words are true—I adjure you to aid me now."

A sudden hot anger leaped to Ren-ko's heart. He had ignored her plea, and cared but to pervert her offer to his selfish ends. He sought but to take every advantage of her love; not to take that love as she had offered it. Palpably he was but playing on her affections, using her love but as a lever to the attainment of his set purpose, and while that belief did not kill her love for him—it was too vast and enduring for mortal slaughter—it aroused in her a contempt of his methods, and a desire to show him how very small he had suddenly become in her eyes.

"If I should consent to tell you what you ask," said she, "what recompense would be mine? For be assured that I would be running no small risk of ultimate discovery."

"Ask what you will," he agreed, eagerly; "it shall be granted with the fullness of a grateful heart."

"Nay," she replied, "it is not for myself that I would ask. My love would bid me give, not sell, its assistance to you. But—as I told you—your personality is known here, and your visits to me have been marked. If I should divulge this plot, suspicion would point through me to my father, who would be accused of traitor-

ous dealing, and himself most harshly dealt with. It is protection for him that I am seeking."

"I will afford him that protection," said he. "Both in my father's name and in my own, I will assist him—I swear it."

"I make no doubt of your willingness so to do," she answered, "but the possibility of performing it. Neither my father nor myself could leave this house without incurring arrest. My father is in the debt of the proprietor, Tanaka san, for yen three thousand, and that amount would have to be repaid before either of us would be permitted to depart hence."

"I will pay it," he complied. "I will send you the amount by messenger in the morning. I will send you as much more as you wish."

"Nay," she answered, "that sum will suffice—that and your promise to aid and protect my father. Do you swear that?"

"By the gods of my house," he affirmed.

She crossed the room to her writing table, returning with it to his side.

"It will be necessary that I have some statement to show my father in order to protect myself against his first wrath," she explained as she placed the table and ink-case before him. "He would not, I fear, understand my motives, and might attribute my confession to you to wrongful causes."

She placed the scroll, that lay beside the ink-case, in his hand as she spoke, and laid her head with the prettiest gesture of a found refuge on his shoulder.

"That is a simple matter," he smiled, slowly unrolling the scroll. "What shall I say?"

When sufficient paper was unrolled, he took a brush from the ink-case and, pondering scarce a moment, stroked rapidly:

I agree to place at the disposal of Saburo Ikeda yen three thousand, and I swear to protect and aid him in the name, and with the influence, of my family and myself.

For a moment he considered what he had written, and then affixing his seal, signed it Tokiyori Yo-Akè.

Ren-ko languidly received the scroll, and reading it, passed to the other side of the hibatchi, while he replaced the writing ma-

terials within the ink-case. He was pleased to have given her this pleasure now—but the forerunner of what he intended should be many. Suddenly she called to him.

He glanced up from the writing table with a smile—a smile that soon faded from his lips when he saw that the scroll she held out to his inspection had more on it—more signatures and seals than his own. What did these mean? From where she stood the heavy brush strokes in the extreme right hand margin of it were plainly decipherable by him, and he read:

We do swear to accomplish the liberation of our Japan of the gods from its "Foreign" yoke; to assist Saburo Ikeda, in which we pledge our souls, our swords, our wealth, and our lives.

His eye traveled swiftly to the signatures—Saito of Satsuma, Watanabe, Nakamura, Kato, Noto-no-kami—he sprang to his feet, but Ren-ko, quicker than his thought, which she anticipated, glided to the shoji, holding the scroll forth over the Nightless Street.

"If you force me to it," she warned with quiet firmness, "I shall drop this to the street and summon aid."

He stood irresolute a moment, and then realizing the futility of attempting to recover the document, sank again to his knees beside the hibatchi. He had learned that which he had come a-seeking. Yet, not only could he make no use of the knowledge, but by the addition of his own name to the scroll—a signature affixed over the writing of treasonable intents in his own hand—had put himself completely in their power. It would be vain for him to attempt explanations should this ever be made public; he had many enemies in the government who would seize only too eagerly upon such a pretext to discredit his name and ruin him, and the one whose word would carry most weight in corroboration of a statement of his innocence would, he fully realized, withold that word. Lord Yo-Akè would never permit it to be supposed that he had been a party to such an intrigue.

Suddenly there was added to his bitterness an admiration for this woman who had so triumphed over him, and to that a fear of her, psychic in its manifestation. She had cajoled, tricked and outwitted him at every move, penetrating his incognito with an

ease that was startling in its simplicity. It seemed to him that he was but as a little child in her hands, helpless to hide even the innermost depths of his soul from her reading. When, just then, she broke the silence to address him, she answered his unspoken thought as though he had voiced it aloud.

"I have no pity for you," said she. "You thought it easy to trick a woman such as I. Why not? You forced me into this place when, for selfish reasons of your own, you were most instrumental in debarring my father from any participation in your government. Did it occur to you then that you were raising up a dangerous enemy to *your* Japan, and creating a woman's—nay, a girl's—ruin? And now that you have failed to win my simple confidence—sought but to betray it, and me—you think yourself harshly used, believing doubtless that there is no faith in womankind. Yet, whom but you have destroyed it—have forced me to this issue to protect myself? Have you no word of contrition—of remorse—for the part you have driven me to play?"

She waited a moment, and then receiving no answer from him, continued:

"I could condone the fact that you sought to gain from me information of a plot you were led to believe existed against your government—even had you been successful in your quest—had you but played fair. But what I cannot forgive is that, unable by your own wits to make the discovery, you had recourse to what you imagined a foolish girl's heart, seeking to gain her confidence by protestations of love to ruin her. Yes, ruin, for the success of your scheming would have meant my bondage here for life as a public woman. My father, as I have told you, is heavily in the debt of the creature who owns this house. Unless this sum is made good before another month is past I must remain here to work off the indebtedness by the small percentage accruing from the ruin of my womanhood. My father's only chance of repaying that sum is through the fulfillment of the vows recorded on this scroll. Do you think me a cheat because I, refusing to be sacrificed to your gain—a man who is seeking to betray and ruin me—have forced you to become one of the signers also, thereby removing from you the power to harm us?"

She gazed upon him scornfully; he was stooped over where he kneeled, his head sunken on his chest. It seemed to Ren-ko that he had suddenly become an old man from whom life was slipping swiftly in a flood of sorrow and failure. A wave of compunction and compassion swept over her—he seemed so lonely, so helpless, so forlorn, and so beaten by adversity. She realized that, whatever his outward manifestations, she had once been permitted to know his soul—and that was clean.

It came to her, overwhelmingly, that she loved this man with his own definition of love once given her—unselfish, charitable, all-forgiving. She clasped the scroll to her heart as though engraving his name there—then, with sudden impulse, made to step toward him, the scroll extended in her hand.

Her attention was diverted toward the fusima depicting the falling cherry petals, for in its opening stood Saito.

He advanced toward her.

"The scroll, if you please," said he.

XX

COMES MIGHTY MAHMÚD WITH HIS SWORD

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

At such moments of extreme tension even the most trivial happenings becomes magnified into important actualities. Ren-ko distinctly heard the tones of the old umbrellaman outside, crying his wares, and caught the chattering of the dining party across the Bridge of Love. She noted that Takè san, while undoubtedly con-

scious of the intrusion of Saito, was apparently oblivious of his presence.

Increasing sounds of bustle and revelry were arising in the house as the evening gathered in, and the scuffling of feet and twinkling of lanterns told that The Jewel River was donning its night garb. A gust of laughter was wafted across the balconies, one voice more insistent than the others.

"Ho-ho! 'A moth seeking the light will burn itself, and a butterfly become caught in a spider's web!' Because of this I have always avoided lovely woman, Taro."

Saito advanced further toward Ren-ko—

"The scroll, if you please," he repeated.

She realized that he must have been a listener, and knew what was passing between Takè and herself concerning its signing. Her one thought now was how to prevent Saito from obtaining the scroll, and so save Takè. As she stood by the hibatchi, hesitating, Takè arose and placed himself quietly between Saito and her. He appeared to note the presence of the former for the first time, as, bowing gravely, he addressed him.

"Your pardon, sir," said he, in the mildest tones imaginable, "but I fear you have mistaken the room. This apartment, with its geisha, has been hired by me for this evening."

"An evening that is like to cost you dear, I am afraid," replied Saito, with a reckless laugh. "But why should you not have a welcome for me, Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè—or, I beg your pardon, Mr. Takè of the North, Sendai way? I perceive from appearances that you have at last decided to join our cause against these traitors who are selling our Nippon to the 'Barbarian.' Still, as you wish to be alone with your geisha, I will, with your permission, receive something I require from her, and then retire."

Takè answered nothing, but his face set suddenly with an unaccustomed hardness. He was determined that Saito should not get the scroll into his possession, believing that with Ren-ko his family name would, at all events, be safe. Yet how to prevent Saito, should he resort to force, he knew not, for physically he would be but a child in the hands of so active and trained a man. Moreover, he dared not call for help, for to do so would but precipitate the exposure.

Again Saito spoke, and in slightly more menacing tones.

"Your pardon, count," said he, his eyes narrowing slightly, "but I think you are standing in my way."

Each was watching for the initial movement of his opponent, forgetting Ren-ko in their hawk-like attitude. Then Saito advanced upon Takè. A sudden drift of smoke and burst of flame filled the room. Instinctively each glanced at Ren-ko, who was just arising from beside the hibatchi. Atop of its coals, a blackened, half-glowing mass of paper was twisting and stretching into a myriad of weirdsome contortions. Then Takè laughed, quietly.

"Oh, Flower Heart!" he called softly across the hibatchi.

He turned to Saito, still courteously.

"I fear you have made a mistake when you suppose my name to be associated with a conspiracy of your plotting," said he. "Doubtless you jested, yet I warn you that it would be unwise to seek to interfere with one of His Majesty's Counselors. Permit me, by retiring, to place this apartment at your disposal. Sayonara, Miss Breath of Mokujima, I will call again shortly."

He left the room composedly enough, but quickened his steps toward the rear stairway as he came out onto the balcony, for his one thought was to reach Shima as swiftly as possible. Then he paused, as a sudden fear came to him—appalling. She who had sacrificed her all for him—a sacrifice he was determined should not be exacted of her—was left alone with a man bitter and thwarted, who might in the anger and disappointment of the moment hesitate at naught. She was his love, her safety more precious to him than aught—beside his trust. If harm came to her it would strike at the best of his life—no, he could not, even for the sake of his trust, leave her in this plight.

Swiftly he started to retrace his steps, when voices arose from the room where Goto and Taro were dining.

"Love is as delicate as a cobweb," was asserting the baron, evidently in a sententiousness born of rich sakè, "and often it is all that stretches across the places that have been."

He laughed boisterously at his epigram.

"I should have thought it more like a red-hot hibatchi," dissented the voice of Taro.

"Nay," laughed Goto, "for a woman may not be trusted to keep that alight."

Takè changed his direction from toward Ren-ko's room to that of the two diners. There a word to a servant brought the baron without. Takè hastily explained Ren-ko's predicament, and his fears for her, attributing the whole to jealous rivalry on the part of Saito. He begged Goto to keep an eye on Ren-ko's room in case of any violent disturbance, and if necessary interfere to protect her, then having received the baron's promise so to do, departed from The Jewel River.

For a few moments after Takè left him, Goto, in deep meditation, stood watching the room indicated. He had a kindly regard for Ren-ko and a compassionate feeling for her circumstances. Suddenly he heard her voice raised in expostulation, drowned by the angry vehemence of others. He half started to her assistance, and then stopped, realizing the futility of any attempted interference between parent and child, for among the protesting and accusing voices he had noted that of her father.

"Poor child!" he murmured, shaking his head sympathetically, "poor child!"

He was about to re-enter his dining room, when the noise of a loud tumult, followed by the thuds of a falling body, came from Ren-ko's room. Then a smothered scream, dying into a low, moaning wail. Goto halted abruptly, straightened himself with military precision, and without further hesitation, stepped forth upon the Bridge of Love, his white evening waistcoat gleaming incongruously in the glimmer of a hanging lantern.

Within her chamber, as the shoji closed behind the retreating form of Takè, Ren-ko knelt, cowering from the look in Saito's eyes. The cherry tree fusima slid, this time admitting her father and Tanaka. Saito turned swiftly to the former.

"Your daughter has destroyed us," he announced.

"Destroyed us!" exclaimed Ikeda, incredulously, starting back; "how, Saito, how?"

"Tokiyori Yo-Akè is her lover," explained Saito, hurriedly. "She has shown him our document and then burned it in the hibatchi.

"That is not so!" cried Ren-ko. "He is not my lover!"

"Silence, girl!" commanded Ikeda, paling. "Where has Yo-Akè gone?" he quavered, addressing Saito. "Was it long since?"

"Just before you came in," answered Saito. "Probably he is even now hastening to set the authorities on our heels."

"You should have prevented him," exclaimed Ikeda.

"How?" asked Saito, with a flash of anger. "Your daughter, after obtaining Tokiyori's seal to the bond, has burnt the document and taken the only weapon out of my hands, and to have forcibly detained a man of his prominence in the government would have been to bring a hornet's nest about our ears."

These conjectures threw Ikeda into a state of abject fear.

"It will go nigh to our death, Saito!" he wailed, wringing his hands. "Say, are we yet too late to effect our escape? Is it too late, Saito?"

He crossed swiftly to a shoji and threw it open, gazing down on the Nightless Street.

"See!" he exclaimed in a whisper, "there appear none on the streets whom we need fear. We may yet make good our escape! There is time if we hurry! There is time!"

Saito regarded him with a brave man's contempt for such a display of arrant cowardice.

"Of course there is time," said he. "Listen closely to what I say. I am going into the city to see how far this affair has gone. Do you prepare your daughter and yourself for immediate departure, taking 'ricksha to Shinagawa, where you may await me at my abode. I will join you there, and we can take junk immediately to Satsuma."

He turned to go, but Tanaka, who had been a silent listener to this, broke in with—

"Not so fast, my lord. What about the funds advanced by me to the honorable Ikeda?"

"What in the name of all the gods of hell have I to do with your affairs?" demanded Saito, fiercely. He was already tried beyond his patience by the events of that day, and it needed but little more to ignite his fury, like spark to powder.

"I must have my monies, nevertheless," replied Tanaka, with an air of insolence bred of the knowledge that he was a creditor of

the chief one of the conspiracy. "I care naught for your rebellion, but the loss of yen three thousand will go nigh to ruin me."

Here was a new stumbling block to Saito's present plans. He realized that the least outcry—such as this fellow would undoubtedly make—would bring the authorities buzzing about their ears, and then farewell to Satsuma for any of them. He thrust his face, now fierce and passion-inflamed, to within an inch of Tanaka's.

"A loud tongue will go still nearer to ruin you," he snarled, so savagely that Tanaka shrank from him, "bear that in mind, you insolent dog. Now Ikeda," he added to the latter, "attend to what I directed, and make all speed."

Ikeda, fearful that without Saito's protection Tanaka would seek to coerce him, grasped Ren-ko by the sleeve with the intention of their following Saito from the house, but Tanaka, divining his purpose, caught at her to detain her.

"You shall not take her!" he cried. "She is my property. I hold a document of her sale to me!"

He strove to drag her from her father's clutch, and in the scuffle that ensued, Ren-ko, hurt by their roughness, cried aloud for help. Steps were heard running up the back stairway, and a heavy tread upon the bridge. Saito glanced swiftly about him, and espying Ikeda's swords upon the rack, reached them with one bound. He seized the first that came to his hand, and drawing it from its scabbard, whirled the bare blade aloft, while the room danced a mad, joyous riot of red blood before his eyes. Tanaka stood directly before him, still holding Ren-ko with Ikeda on her other side. With a smothered shout, Saito rushed for Tanaka, the steel encircling his head in bright, angry flashes.

Then it was that her father, bewildered by the action of Saito, in his excitement passed in front of her as Saito struck blindly at Tanaka, and the great blade went crashing through Ikeda's skull. Not a cry escaped from her father as he collapsed face downwards upon the mats—dead.

Saito dropped the sword, brought to his senses by this calamity, and Tanaka, loosening his hold of Ren-ko, slunk shivering into the toko-no-ma. A shriek broke from Ren-ko, followed by a long low wail, as she threw herself on her father's body. In awe-struck

silence Saito regarded the results of his deed, then as the footsteps approached the shoji, flung himself through it with an oath, colliding with the just entering form of Goto. Before the baron could recover himself, Saito had reached the rear stairway and disappeared.

Goto paused on the threshold and noted the scene. Before him lay Saburo Ikeda, his distorted features upturned in a motley of blood and hair, and beside him, her face buried in her father's kimono, was Ren-ko.

Goto, believing at first that both had been slain, crossed to the bodies and stooped over Ren-ko to raise her, when Tanaka, fearful for the loss of his property, emerged from the toko-no-ma, and placing his hand rudely on Goto's white waistcoat, pushed him from her.

"You shall not touch her!" he shrieked to Goto. "You shall not have her! She is mine, I tell you! I hold the bond of her sale."

Goto, his eyes fairly ablaze, whirled on Tanaka like a flash, and literally tore him from Ren-ko.

"The collector of mummies will soon be one himself!" he shouted, and flung Tanaka crashing through the shoji. Tanaka, striking backwards on the balcony ledge, bounded to the low bamboo railing, which the weight of his body broke through, and fell to the courtyard below, where he lay a groaning, quivering heap. Goto turned, and bent over Ren-ko again.

"Poor child!" said he in perplexity, "poor child."

She raised her head and looked up at him.

"Oh, take me from this! Please take me from this!" she cried.

A great thought came to Goto.

"'The old tree has need of fresh branches for shade'," he muttered. "I shall be over lonely after Taro leaves me."

He put forth his hands suddenly and plucked her up into his arms.

"Banzai!" roared Baron Goto as he bore Ren-ko across the Bridge of Love.

XXI

THE ANGEL BY THE RIVER-BRINK

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE day following, Tokiyori learned through the baron of the events that had happened after his departure from the houses of The Jewel River. Further it appeared that Tanaka—though greatly injured by the fall he had received at the baron's hands—had already made requisition to the authorities for the return of Ren-

ko to his house, a piece of information that was causing the baron the greatest concern, until Tokiyori informed him of the existence of such proof against the loyalty of Tanaka as would cause his imprisonment.

With Tanaka's coming trial for conspiracy, Tokiyori foresaw that the fact of his visits to the Yoshiwara would become public, and his character, with the world's usual charitable interpretation, suffer accordingly, particularly in the light of his recent ardent speeches against such cases of Yoshiwara traffic as Ren-ko's. In imagination he already anticipated the smiles of polite incredulity with which his next speech against the ruination of young womanhood would be received by the Diet. On the conclusion of the baron's tale, he requested permission to call upon Ren-ko Ikeda that day.

"The Lady Ren-ko Ikeda," said Goto, drawing himself up very grandly, "has done me the honor to become one of my family. Her past life is not my affair—is, indeed, a closed book—but from now on she is the Lady Ren-ko Goto, daughter of General Baron Goto of the Imperial Army."

"My dear baron," answered Tokiyori, "I assure you that I both have, and have always had, the utmost respect for the Lady Ren-ko Goto. It has been one of the privileges of my life that I have been honored with her slight acquaintance. With your consent, I will pay my respects to your daughter this afternoon."

"My daughter," said the baron, "will be at home to your distinguished visit. I must make excuses for my absence, as Taro is sailing for America and I must accompany him to Yokohama this afternoon."

Tokiyori spent the greater part of that day at his desk in the Diet chambers, but, as the afternoon wore on, took 'ricksha to the besso Ayamè—the villa of the Iris—as Goto had named his Mukojima residence. His reasons for so doing were twofold: first, an uncontrollable desire to see Ren-ko again, and also because some understanding as to their future relationship must be arrived at. As Goto's adopted daughter her position would be vastly different, and their opportunities for meeting socially unavoidable. How then were they to meet before the world?

Close by the bank of the Sumida lay the villa Ayamè, to the gateway of which a glade of larch and maple led. From there a gracefully arching bridge brought the visitor into the gardens, through which a brook descended in a series of little cascades, passing beneath two lower bridges, until it flowed into the waters of the dark Sumida. The residence was girt with a high hedge, and past this a lane ran, disclosing unexpected nooks and corners of surprising loveliness. Not far away the traffic plied to and from the Cherry Avenue, yet so secluded was Ayamè that it was unheard by the dwellers of the besso.

At the gateway Tokiyori descended from his 'ricksha, and crossing the bridge that led to the gardens, turned into the lane on his way to the courtyard of the house. New fallen snow carpeted the grounds and lay in a fluffy mantle on the curved house-tops and foliage. Here and there under the white covered trees little colored lanterns peeped unexpectedly, lighted in anticipation of the approaching short twilight, although the stains spilled by the ruddy sun's goblet had not yet been removed by the tireless servant Dusk, who prepares the apartments for Night. Suddenly Tokiyori heard his name exclaimed—his name of his other life—

"Takè san!"

He glanced about and perceived Ren-ko standing beneath the silver hangings of a tree. A lantern swung just before her from an adjacent bough; she put this lightly aside with one shapely hand so that he saw her face.

There were traces of sorrow upon it, intensifying her wondrous beauty, and in it was reflected, unmistakably, her marvelous love —for him. Again she called in a voice rich with perfect happiness at his nearness—

"Takè san!"

The doubts regarding their future relationship that had assailed him since learning of her adoption by Goto suddenly cleared away. He bowed most courteously.

"Baron Goto's daughter, I believe?" he asked. "Permit me to offer my respects to you. The baron called upon me at my offices a few short hours since."

For the moment Ren-ko was stunned. The cold, deliberately

polite tones and manner were so different to what she had pictured their meetings would be.

"Are you not glad to see me?" she faltered.

"Honored, rather," he answered, again bowing.

"It is all so different from what it was," she continued. "Then, if you recollect, the cherry gave you its morning fragrance. Now that I am no longer the cherry"—an allusion to her late "house name"—"I may blow for you the live-long day."

His heart was sick within him with the hurts he was dealing her; she was after all such a child in sophistry, despite her cleverness and worldly experience.

"Again I am honored," he answered, most courteously. "But, pardon me. I note that you address me as Takè, whereas my name is Tokiyori—Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of the Imperial Diet."

"But to me always Takè san," she replied, quickly.

"I would it were my lot to be so fortunate," said he, again bowing, "yet I fear that you have confused me with some other of your acquaintance. I assure you the former is my only name."

She opened her eyes wide, inarticulate for the moment in her astonishment.

"Would you have me believe that I never called you Takè san, a name I have grown to have the tenderest recollections of?" she asked, finally.

"A probable resemblance to the one you so designate has possibly misled you," he equivocated. It seemed so cruel a thing to tell her what he knew he must. "This is the first time I have been privileged to meet Baron Goto's daughter," he added.

Hurt as she was, she determined to force him to an acknowledgment of what he was to her. What mattered it whether he called himself Takè or Tokiyori, whether unknown or famed, poor or rich. All that she desired to know was whether or no he loved her.

"Have you then also forgotten Flower Soul?" she asked, with a studied calmness.

"I never knew it, I fear," he answered, imperturbably.

She shivered slightly, although her eyes were like hibatchi coals.

"Naturally, then," said she, with a dangerous sweetness of manner, "you could not have known Takè san."

"I assure you I have not that pleasure," he replied.

She came a few steps closer to him.

"I see, *now,* my mistake," said she, quietly. "Takè san—to whom I refer—was the very soul of gentleness and honor. It would have been impossible for himself to be otherwise. Yet the first likeness was so startling that I actually mistook you for him. You are positive you know nothing of my Takè san?"

"Absolutely," he assured her, coldly. "I am, as I informed you, Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of the Imperial Diet. I fear that pressure of duties to the State allow me all too few opportunities for cultivating the acquaintance of people outside their purview. It is a misfortune by which I acknowledge myself the loser."

She met his denial with apparent sang froid, its reason she thought she understood. He desired to show her that a wide social circle lay between Count Tokiyori Yo-Akè, of Moto and Shima, and a former geisha of the Flower Quarter—albeit she was now the adopted daughter of one of his friends—which one known as Takè san could now no longer bridge over.

"Takè san," she explained to him, "was in every way, I think, worth the knowing; the loss is indeed your lordship's. His was a character that would, I am sure, have interested you greatly. In appearance he was, as I have said, startlingly your counterpart, saving that his eyes were perhaps more tender and his manner less formal. But it was, after all, to the mind and soul of the man that one looked for his real self. I do not think a soul could ever have been fashioned more beautifully than was the real soul of Takè san. And he loved, yes, I know he loved all humanity, all suffering ones, with that great, hidden, poet-nature of his, as tenderly as the early cherry, and as warmly as the autumn maple, and as mightily as the strong winter pine. His soul was all of these, and it could not lie. I knew him in—it matters not where, no locality could hold the soul of Takè san. It was of everywhere, and of no particular where, and it was human—oh, but it was human! He was of the north, he said—a student of the fishes; but I think that he was the greatest teacher of all, for he taught but the nude truth.

It is strange—now that I come to think of it—that I should have mistaken your lordship for my Takè san."

He winced, while still preserving his outwardly composed demeanor. Ren-ko noted it, and, with true feminine tenderness, intuitively picked out the most raw spots to play upon.

"Thus," said she, "was my Takè—one who came once into a garden where grew many flowers. Some of them were brilliant, some faded, yet all were befouled because the soil in which they grew was impure. In the night time many lanterns festooned this garden, and then all the flowers appeared brightly hued and happy—it was only in the daylight that one could see they were not fresh flowers. Yet Takè came to the garden often, and he looked with a sorrowing love on all the flowers, bright or faded, because he was a poet, and he knew and understood, and loved the handicraft of the gods, good or evil. One he named Flower Soul, and each day he taught it to blow its perfume ever sweeter, telling it wondrous tales of gardens where dwelt the gods, until the soul of this flower was ravished, and it came to blow its petals for Takè, only. Oh, say, my lord," she broke off, "have you never known such a one as Takè—Takè san who loved the flowers so?"

It seemed to him as though she were some avenging goddess, given the power of words that were both nard and hyssop. The right to inflict pain was now hers, and he mentally acknowledged the justice of its use. He had deliberately and successfully taught her to love him that he might the surer draw from her admissions concerning her father and Saito, and now that he had fallen into his own trap—had found his most potent weapon turned against himself—he could have no cause of complaint. By a superhuman effort he stifled his desire to take her into his arms, forgetting all else other than their love, for the hour of his punishment was at hand. She watched intently for the effect of her words upon him, and then went on.

"But what matter mere names? Whether Takè or Tokiyori, whether Flower Soul or Ren-ko, the man is the man, and the woman the woman; between them but the oneness of their love trod in a rose-blood torrent from the grape of their lives. Can a woman and man stand before one another with bared souls and then so cloak these as to be a stranger semblance to each other

ever after? Man-made we stand before one another, but god-made we came into this world; who dare attempt the reformation of that fashioned by the gods? Are you a greater artist? Our souls are ours—or; rather, we are our souls, and what is sent into them is from the gods—not from man. Into the garden of my soul were you *sent* to make its flowers pure—why may I not keep that which was *sent* into my soul?"

He found his voice at last.

"Lent—not sent, Ren-ko, my lotus, thou emblem of purity found in impurity."

She gave a delighted little cry of rapture; he had acknowledged her.

"Lent or sent," she answered, happily, "it was by the gods in either case."

Without the least connection, there suddenly flashed across his mind some forgotten words:

"Through paths that are very difficult will the way run toward the City of Desire."

With an effort he recalled that they had once been uttered by the friend and attendant of his boyhood, the old hanashika of his family, Nakahara. He must bring her to see the truth of these.

"It was a loan of the gods," he conceded, "but one that we must some day give an accounting of."

"And, if a real loan, a living thing!" she cried in ecstasy. "You must have believed it! You must have known it was the loan of yourself to me?"

"It was—and is," he answered simply.

"Then why do you seek to take it from me?" she went on with a display of righteous indignation. "If the gods have loaned you to me, what right have you to seek to deprive me of yourself? It is theirs to give in life, to take away in death. What right have you," she repeatedly fiercely, "to tamper with that which belongs to the gods?"

"Because," he answered, slowly and sorrowfully, "it is a loan which some day we—you and I—will be called upon to return as honored as when received. We would but sully it by longer use now. We may not—cannot—efface its memory I know, but at least we may strive to keep that memory bright as well as fresh."

For the first time since the great change in her life he touched her—laid his hand upon her head, gently, with a sorrowful, wistful caress, such a caress as one gives to one departed from all present earthly communication.

"There is honor, Ren-ko—as much to your life as mine—that must always forerun good love. My honor is my duty—yours, I think, to assist that honor in its fulfillment. The honor of each of us is separate and distinct, yet indissolubly wedded. You would not degrade our love to the level of beasts of the field? I know that, as you say, Takè did not lie to Flower Heart when speaking with his soul, so neither did Flower Heart lie to Takè. Even in the evil surroundings where they came to find their love, their intercourse was founded on respect—a spiritual marriage bed whose coverlets were honor. I want to keep the memory of what it meant fragrant, not soiled. Some day must my little daughter grow up, and love and be loved. I could wish her no better and truer love than is our real, underlying love, if you will but help me keep it so."

He gazed upon her with a look, the sincerity of which there was no mistaking.

"You must see, O Heart of Mine, what must be—and why. It is as necessary to the continuance of our love as is ever untainted air to our lives. It means that we must not attempt to know one another again, as we have known—can but speak to each other only through the mouths of assembled friends—gaze each on the other only through the eyes of those in whose company we chance to meet, for in future it is there alone where we must meet. Yet, through it all, shall we have the comfort of our great love, abiding, all sacrificing, known but to us, existing in that utter silence that is the perfect test of its worth and endurance. It may be that some day the gods, because of so great an interpretation of their own loves, will grant that we commingle in thought. I think that such will be—nay, I believe it. By the favor of the gods may our thoughts, when flashed across the space dividing us, bring no harmful attendants with them, O thou Thought-Life of mine!—sayonara!"

When she raised her head naught material remained of him but the imprint of his feet in the snow. She clasped her hands over her heart with a gesture of sharp pain. It was the end. The short twilight had fallen, tracing soft loving lines about her face and form, retouching the large luster violet eyes, liquid with their unshed tears. Dowered beyond the avarice for beauty of woman, it seemed her gifts were granted her but that they might be used to destroy her birthright.

His footprint in the snow told how close to her he had just stood. Reverently she knelt, stooped and touched it with her lips.

XXII

OVER THE FLAMING SHOULDERS OF THE FOAL

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul. . . .—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

CONSTERNATION reigned in Tokyo next day among governmental officials and populace, for the news of Saburo Ikeda's death in The Jewel River had been made public. Thus was disclosed the plot on which he had been engaged, and the subsequent flight of Saito. For the Diet, and those to whom the maintenance

of governmental supremacy intact was paramount, trying days were in store; for the masses—to whom was Saito a hero and a darling—eager sensation and expectancy. It was known that, after the killing of Ikeda—who in death achieved a prominence that would have gladdened the latter years of his life—Saito had succeeded in getting clear of the Yoshiwara, but there all clue as to his movements abruptly terminated. The government feared, and the people hoped, that he had succeeded in making good his escape to Satsuma, and was already at the head of several thousand ronin samurai who would call him lord and captain.

What actually had happened was that, after escaping through the Yoshiwara O-mon, Saito made directly for the house of a friend where a horse was ever in readiness for him against such an emergency, relays being maintained at various points along the Tokaido. He had ridden hard to the outskirts of the city, and then a sudden thought occurring to him, turned his steed's head in the direction of the Shiba woodlands—an act in keeping with the utter recklessness of his character when aroused.

In the depths of Shiba he drew rein and, dismounting, advanced cautiously to the same balcony up which he had once climbed to Kiku-ko, lured by what wild intentions the gods alone know. Then again the woodlands heard the song of the Island of Tsushima, but this time only the woodlands answered seemingly, yet was convinced that Kiku-ko had heard.

That night a horse and rider tore through Shinagawa, saddle housings and heaving flanks a creamy lather, and before the startled inhabitants could catch more than a fleeting glimpse of steed or horseman, were swallowed by the outer darkness. The villagers, believing it to be a messenger of the government riding for one of the prefectures, returned to their warm futons, and Saito passed toward the long stretch of the Tokaido, and on to Satsuma.

Thereafter, and for the ensuing several months, events came and went with an ever-changing rapidity. Rumors of the progress of the revolt soon reached Tokyo from stricken or beleaguered provinces and towns. Now they had sacked that stronghold, now they had razed this fortalice, and with each fresh reported

success Saito's prestige rose higher and higher with the masses, until he became openly deified as an almost god. At last it was plain that one of two things must happen—either Saito and his cause must be swiftly defeated, subdued and broken, or Nippon would be plunged into another civil war that would bid fair to outdo that leading to the glorious restoration of the Mikado..

At this juncture the hopes of the Imperialists were focused upon General Goto, who was forthwith ordered to Satsuma in command of a large corps. Goto accepted this mission with the joy natural to a soldier when ordered on active service, the one drawback to his happiness being the still unsettled claim of Tanaka of The Jewel River for the person of Ren-ko, pending in the courts. Remembering Tokiyori's hints of proofs against the loyalty of Tanaka, Goto had recourse to the former, his mind being relieved when Tokiyori promised that such a prosecution would be brought against Tanaka as would effectually preserve Ren-ko from further apprehension from that source. So in the last of Gogatsu (the fifth month), Goto had departed with his staff in all pomp and splendor for the seat of war.

Nine weeks elapsed, bringing news from the front of Goto's hemming in of Saito's forces on the lowlands of Satsuma, and the consequent impossibility of escape for the two thousand five hundred odd rebels through the net drawn about them; bringing also the event of Tanaka's trial for treason. True to his word, Tokiyori appeared in person against the owner of The Jewel River, a step that resulted in Tanaka's conviction, he being awarded a term of six years penal servitude as a *particeps criminis* to the conspiracy, and his property declared forfeit.

This was not accomplished without the disclosure of Tokiyori's visits to the Flower Quarter, and it would be superfluous to detail the avidity with which the press seized upon this "scandal in high life," or how—by suggestion and otherwise—it linked the names of Tokiyori Yo-Akè and Ren-ko, born Ikeda. As a climax, Tanaka's terrific denunciation of his accuser in open court ran the length and breadth of the land.

"Not I, but you, Tokiyori Yo-Akè," he thundered, as he was led forth to his sentence, "are the traitor spurned of the gods! Why

tell you not also to this tribunal that your name, in your own hand, and over your own seal, was added to the scroll—placed there at the bidding of your mistress? Why tell you not of an hundred visits paid her? Of the long hours spent—not in a public room as customary for geisha entertainment—in private in her own chamber? Why did you sign that document if you were not of the conspiracy? Why linger in the arms of my geisha if you were not her lover? Why swear to assist her and her father with your wealth and influence? Condemn, imprison me as you will, I tell you that you stand before all a worse traitor to your country, your name and the honor of your family, than I whom you have caused to be sentenced, and by the spirits of my departed yujo, Tokiyori Yo-Akè, I swear that you and I shall ere long stand together before a tribunal of the gods to advance our claims of justice—I have spoken."

That day the story of Tokiyori and Ren-ko, The Jewel River and the room across the Bridge of Love, was borne to a thousand ears; over hill and valley it went, through temple and hovel, and under the great gate of Shima and the little portal of the Shiba besso. One alone, perhaps, sorrowed understandingly, whilst fast and thick fell the tear-drops at the villa of the Iris. Not Tanaka of The Jewel River, but Tokiyori Yo-Akè of Moto and Shima had been on his trial.

XXIII

BLOWN FLOWERS

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—THIS *Life flies;*
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

CAME September, tinting with burnt umber the lotus leaves. Against an overhanging headland in the lowlands of Satsuma a moaning sea was tapping occult warnings, unheeded by a knot of knights in rusted armor who crowned the headland crest. From their feet a steep slope stretched away into a great plain, alive

now with a modern army. It was the wane of the day—a day of fierce fighting since early dawn, lulling a moment with the setting of the sun. Bushido was dying in a blaze of glory; Occidentalism triumphing.

From among the samurai who rested with their backs to the sea stepped forth one, and scanned anxiously the distant serried lines of the Imperial troops beneath him. Then he turned to his comrades, and with a soldier's eye re-marshalled their ranks from double to single. The problem that confronted him was past solution—six months of mostly victorious fighting, resulting only in a diminution of his force to a scant half thousand men-at-arms; all retreat cut off by land and sea, and against them a score-and-a-half thousand trained and drilled troops, armed with modern weapons.

The leader of the samurai watched the maneuverings of the great host preparing to speed up the slope against him. Suddenly these faded from his sight, and headland, sea, plain and panoply of war went into a mist. A placid lake, over which a magnificent castle peered, lay before him. He entered the gate of this fortalice, and descending a pathway that led to a brook, turned aside to a nearby bower of hanging wistaria. The blooms were parted like curtains for his entrance—within sat beautiful Shadow, the Art-Maid. She arose, and taking his hand, led him through a garden to the slope of a great rainbow. Together they breasted it, and stood above the world. Some hand was suddenly removed from his eyes.

Below him, and about, stretched the vast universe, alive with the thoughts of men. Shadow pointed to these.

"Our children," she said, and that was all.

It came to him that æons ago Shadow and a Soldier—the daughter of Light and Darkness, the son of Thunder and Lightning—had populated the great nothingness with thoughts—some good, some evil and corrupt. He watched more closely.

A great war seemed in progress—armies streaming after armies. It was the fight for the life of the world—commerce! an ever-raging battle seemingly, yet bloodless because fought by thoughts. Beyond rolled a vast sea, alive with navies. As the vision grew nearer he saw that these vessels were but traders—

Another vision: Nippon lay before his eyes, black smoke—haze rising from a myriad factory chimneys, the clangor of machinery, deafening and insistent. Her armies were garbed after the fashion of merchants; her navies bearing merchandise instead of deadly weapons.

A red sun was setting in a burst of blood; the silver of night was gathering about the mouth of life's mold; the dawn would be gold.

Indistinctly—from somewhere not of the vision—he seemed to hear three sullen shouts, such as gallant men might give when turning their faces to a foe for the last time. He broke his sword across and flung the fragments from him.

"Farewell, Nippon!" he cried; "land of the gods that are no more! The bones of thy great gone shall rot in thy neglected crypts, nor shall thy quick know aught again of honor in thy name. Farewell, Bushido, thou valor of our fathers! Your noble corse is gnawed down to its marrow by the whetted fangs of trade and commerce—farewell!"

As night gathered in Baron Goto and his staff rode among the silent ranks that lay across the crest of the headland. Below the sea still moaned, but its occult tappings against the cliffs had ceased. The forelight of the moon was pushing through the black, oily wash of the ocean, giving sufficient light to distinguish objects with clearness. The general drew rein before a little mound of bodies whose position denoted the last stand, and ordered one of his staff to dismount and search among the fallen.

The officer, obeying, suddenly gave an exclamation, and turned over an armored figure, raising the cracked and battered casque so that the features of the slain were visible.

"It is, without doubt, Saito of Satsuma," reported the staff officer to his general.

Goto gazed down upon the noble countenance, once so familiar. The moon arose and softened the gory flecks about the disemboweled body. He saluted, solemnly.

"'The mother-in-law must one day give place to the bride'," said he, gravely. "The old order has passed; a gallant gentleman has gone from among us this day."

Slowly rode general and staff back to the Imperial lines as the moon stretched a silver veil over the iron sleepers of Satsuma.

It played over Shima, too, that night, tracing the lintel of the great gate and the leaden grey walls of other days with a sad familiarity. Within the library of the castle yashiki stood three—Lord Yo-Akè, Kiku-ko and Tokiyori. Lord Yo-Akè was speaking:

"If you can find it in your conscience to credit these canards against your husband, my daughter," said he, in conclusion to an argument, "there is nothing further to be urged against your decision."

"If they are lies, why do you not deny them?" she replied to the marquis; "or you?" she added, addressing her husband. "I ask you both for some little word of the meaning of these dreadful stories against Tokiyori," she continued to her father-in-law, "and you put me off with a dissertation on the evils of freedom of the press, while he refuses to make me any answer. Once he told me that the right of equal voice and judgment with man was the birthright of every woman. I claim that now; I will abide with him as *the* wife, only."

"It is one of the established tenets of all proper administration of justice," began Lord Yo-Akè, "that the innocence of the accused is to be presumed until disproven beyond a reasonable doubt. The power of judgment is an awful weapon, to be used solely with the most extreme caution lest we make of justice a criminal suicide—"

"Can an administration of justice mend broken marital rights for the woman?" interrupted Kiku-ko.

She pointed to the ihai of his dead wife, lit by its small, ever-burning lamp.

"By the memory to which that is inscribed," she demanded, "are these accusations against my husband false or true?"

She waited a moment for an answer, and then repeated—

"Are they false or true?"

"Why do you address yourself to me exclusively?" asked Lord Yo-Akè, finally.

"Because my husband's life is open only to you," she replied, bitterly.

Lord Yo-Akè regarded her thoughtfully a moment. Almost between them stood Tokiyori, immobile.

"In the Garden of Life," said the marquis, "some one must be appointed to tend the flowers—not favored ones, but all. It would be a sorry gardener, my daughter, who would leave some to chance dew, watering only those most cared for. And though the chrysanthemum, grown merely to decorate our homes, requires more careful culture than the foul-grown lotus—that beautiful emblem of purity rising from the stagnant pool—he has his duty to each."

"Now, I understand," said she, in a low voice. "I am not of the mud where the sacred lotus grows; I—the chrysanthemum—was born only to adorn. With my husband's permission, I will retire to Tsushima, to our villa at Idzu-ga-hara."

The marquis shook his head, helplessly.

"And Aysia?" he asked; then added with as near an approach to sarcasm as he ever permitted to escape him, "and Aysia? I presume some arrangements for her future should be considered?"

Tokiyori spoke for the first time.

"Aysia accompanies her mother," he announced.

Kiku-ko regarded him with a look of grateful relief, while he continued, addressing her—

"The responsibility devolving upon you because of your choice —in which I have sought neither to urge, nor dissuade you—is greater, possibly, than you at present comprehend. Aysia's education will be conducted in America, England, and on the Continent. It is you who must prepare the soil of her mind for the harvest. The soul of a little maid is the most delicate of all the god's creations. No fabric was ever woven so spotlessly; none that may as easily be spoiled. Once soil the virgin garment of womanhood and the mantel is forever ruined. Yet ignorance is of no kith to innocence. I wish my daughter *innocent*—like an unfolding flower that sees all life about it, the weeds and tares as well as the beautiful verdure, yet keeps its own scent sweet and pure. If she is so taught, some day a husband may be enabled to go to her with secrets of his life's work, knowing that from such a woman he will receive naught but aid and understanding."

He relapsed into silence, and after a few half-hearted attempts on the part of his father to alter Kiku-ko's decision, she took her departure for the besso.

Lord Yo-Akè turned to his son.

"It seems to be the end," he observed; "regretable, of course, and all the more so because I fear the knowledge of her decision, when made public, will serve to confirm these unfortunate stories in the papers. I can not think you acted with your usual wisdom, my son, when you permitted yourself to be inveigled into a public statement of your connection with Goto's adopted daughter and The Jewel River."

"My dear father," answered his son, "I think we humans are but lanterns of the earth, lighting here and there some little darksome nook. Some nooks are so heavy with clinging growth that no lantern light can penetrate them, others show forth their hidden beauties in the faintest glimmer. The lantern tender furnishes us with wick and oil, hanging us in the nooks which he deems best; we can but glow where we are placed so long as our little lamps may burn."

"And when—as it seems with you, Tokiyori—the lantern is to be discarded?" supplemented his father.

"The lantern tender will replace the light with a better one," answered Tokiyori. "Nippon has no nook just now, I feel, to hang the lantern of my life in, so I have decided to take another tour of observation abroad. There is much to be studied, and it may be that my light will glow brighter from there."

The marquis dropped his head upon his chest.

"I am an old man, Tokiyori," said he, "and I fear the responsibility of being alone. Like a darkening nook, I have come to regard you as my lantern. It is an awful thing to be left—alone—in the dark."

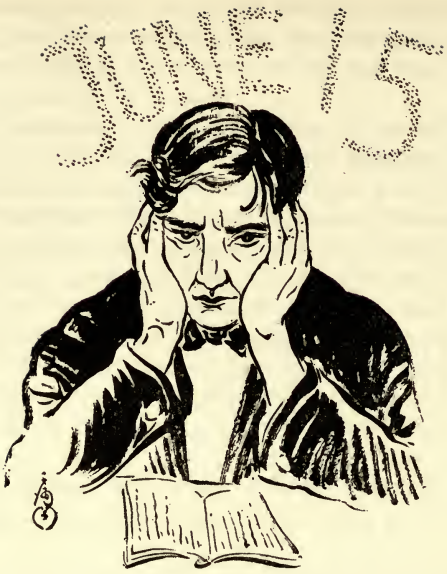
He pondered a long time, while silence reigned in the room. Finally he spoke as though to himself, in low, dreamy tones:

"'A great town once reared its golden walls to guard a far-away land, and a winding, oft-hidden roadway led to this City of Desire. Adown this glade had passed in their time many a prince,

lord, soldier, beggar and son of toil, all intent upon reaching the gates; yet, because the way was dark in parts and fraught often with pitfalls, none had as yet come anigh to the City of Desire'."

He came close to his son, and laid his two hands on his shoulders, looking earnestly into his eyes.

"I know not," said he, "whether Nakahara had a further meaning in his legend of a samurai and a crow, told here in that dark year that heard the American warships thundering at our gates; but, despite all our efforts, the roadway to the City of Desire is still a closed book. What it is—where it is—we have not yet ascertained, only to where it leads. Go, my son, and find this roadway to the City of Desire."



XXIV

THE TAVERN LIGHT

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE annual season of one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three ended as usual in Washington, seat of the United States Government. Congress was preparing for its long vacation. The White House functions were discarded for the hot months. The birds of fashion were flitting hither and thither—abroad for the

London season and continental spas, or to native resorts from the Adirondacks to the Sierras. In the city were left but the few governmental clerks, chained to their Ixion-like wheels of routine, and those military and naval officers unable to obtain leave from their duties. Thus, socially and departmentally, a sense of utter desolation lay from the Capitol to the now deserted grounds of Chevy Chase.

In the Metropolitan Club—cool, awning-shaded, inviting—such habituès as remained in town, perforce, were arriving for the evening—men in flannels, men in semi-business garb. The conventional frock coat and dinner dress were conspicuous by their absence, save in one instance, that of Viscount Sakurai, Japanese ambassador to the United States, who, small, dapper and immaculately attired, according to the rigor of social etiquette, evidently awaited guests, or guest, before adjourning to the club dining-room.

Presently this latter arrived, and Sakurai arose to greet him.

"My dear Tokiyori," said he, warmly, "I am indeed fortunate. I feared that my poor invitation would scarce tempt you to such exertion this hot evening."

Tokiyori took a chair near his compatriot and lit a cigarette, while a club steward served the two with an iced mint julep.

"I received your note only at the last moment," explained Tokiyori. "I am glad that I was fortunate enough to arrive in time."

He whiffed luxuriously at the fragrant Russian cigarette, for he was an exquisite in such matters, and prepared to enjoy his evening with Sakurai.

Viscount Sakurai was a scholarly man, the essence of refinement, added to which he possessed a very wide understanding of the world, and was noted as a raconteur. His estate of Niijima, in Tokyo, was famed for its artistic beauty the length and breadth of the land, and was pronounced by competent judges more perfect even than Moto, on Lake Biwa. Both men were old acquaintances, on terms of some intimacy with one another, and although differing at times politically, were thoroughly en rapport on the one great topic—dai Nippon.

Although Sakurai had been resident for the past three years at

Washington, and Tokiyori absent from Japan twice that length of time, they had not met abroad heretofore. Tokiyori had been traveling in England, on the Continent and in Russia, varying this program with occasional short trips to the Western States and Canada. Twice, also, he had been to China, and had traversed part of the Persian route to India, but it was in western America and the Isthmus of Panama where his attentions had been most intently focused. He had but just arrived in Washington after a year of study on shipping conditions and an observation of Taro Goto's Japanese colony in California. His invitation to dine with Sakurai had followed directly on the announcement of his presence in Washington.

Their cigarettes finished, they adjourned to a small, sequestered, palm-screened table in the club dining-room. Hitherto they had been conversing in French, but with the advent of dinner, in its seclusion, dropped naturally into their native tongue.

"I am expecting my transfer to St. Petersburg shortly," announced Sakurai, confidentially. "I was in hopes of a recall home, but it seems that is ordained otherwise. Three years' absence from one's native country makes one long ardently for the chance of return."

"Yet, you have been home," reminded Tokiyori.

"Yes," answered Sakurai, "I was home two months ago—still it is only in the nature of a flying visit that one can leave one's duties."

"The viscountess enjoys American society, does she not?" queried Tokiyori.

"Oh, thoroughly!" laughed Sakurai. "Entre nous, my friend, I think Americans the most constant source of entertainment imaginable. To me they are unique as a race of glaring inconsistencies and contradictions. They decry against any form of titular rank, and worship the holders of such; they prate of the equality of man, and establish among them a dollarocracy that outbids in selfish power the most absolute despotism; the most progressive of peoples, they are the most obsolete; wise, and simple as children; democratic, and boastful; warlike, and unmilitary; and, withal, eaten up with a conceit in themselves, and utterly failing

to note the things that grow before their eyes. Their press is local rather than world wide; their teachings to their children in their schools insular, narrow, bigoted and prejudiced in the extreme. They call their country a republic, themselves republicans, and are positively vulgar in their display of personal adornment and wealth; and, while deifying their system of government, they never lose occasion to villify its incumbent publicly. It would not surprise me to see them with the Monroe document in one hand, grasping out with the other for lands in which they have neither right nor interest. What will be the eventual destiny of a people so great, so shortsighted, so purposeful, so unbalanced, so steadfast, so neurotic, I forbear to conjecture—probably it will be a destiny of superlative inconsistencies. In the meantime they are—to me—absorbing as a study in depth and shallowness."

"By shortsightedness, I presume you refer to their neglect of their merchant marine, and their failure to establish a trade control in South America," rejoined Tokiyori. "That, at least, will be to our advantage, possibly. Some day the traffic of the world will be shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific we hope."

"The Lake of Japan," supplemented Sakurai. "The Romans are credited with a saying *that all roads lead to Rome.*"

"But, now, it must be in peace," warned Tokiyori.

Sakurai shrugged his shoulders.

"The course of empire, my dear Tokiyori," he observed dryly, "has made a merry jest of that word."

"The course of empire has made a jest of many things," rejoined Tokiyori—"of great nations, and even of its very self. History has taught us, Sakurai, that for man to accomplish anything he must become its tyrant. Hitherto war has been our human tyranny; *now* it is time we modernists became *its* oppressor."

"So we have," laughed Sakurai. "Most distinctly so, I should say. War is now no longer a necessity to national honor; it is the result of a money mechanism to which we apply the lever."

"Why apply this lever to war, then?" questioned Tokiyori. "If nothing else could be urged against it, war is but a foolish way of attempting to strengthen our national resources. There is no more expensive speculation a nation may indulge in than going to war.

I leave the question of morality out of this discussion and make my appeal merely as a matter of common-sense business conduct to any nation."

"That," answered Sakurai, "depends upon how the diplomats manage to conduct the sequence of a war. There is such a thing, my dear fellow, as *indemnity and territory.*"

"At the risk of what?" rejoined Tokiyori. "And are the intellects of diplomatists so dulled that bloodshed is of necessity to sharpen them? Your argument would place diplomats in the same category as is the magistrate, who, unable to convict his prisoner by his wits, seeks to force a confession of his guilt from him with chains and staves."

Sakurai sipped his wine reflectively.

"There is another phase of the question that does not come within your condemnation," said he, at length. "I refer to our national esprit—Bushido. There is a morale attached to war that tends to hold us modern men up to a higher plane—it inculcates honor and sacrifice. Without this war-engendered morale—our Bushido—I fear, my friend, that we should soon merge into cold, selfish, calculating money-making machines."

"I deny that, too," smiled Tokiyori. "Bushido is distinctly a code of individualism. In reality it is our most deeply inherent religion. Its manifestations are primarily *not* in deeds of blood, but in honor, love and the highest sense of duty. Shorn of localism, it is in essence what the Christus died to prove. Wherein is there any spirit of war there? Did He bid His disciples go forth with guns to teach the heathen? I claim that our Bushido is our strongest factor toward peace, and that it is imperishable in our make-ups. As to your material argument that militarism, and its factor, heroism, are the essence of Bushido, I would point out to you that the fire fighter, or the city policeman, display quite as much heroic bravery as any soldier."

"My dear fellow, you are an altruist," observed Sakurai.

"As to the cost of peace today," continued Tokiyori, "how few of the workers of the world have any conception of the amount of universal energy that is absorbed in the effort to maintain it. Even here in this great country of the United States nearly eighty per

cent of its national energy and resources is given over to protecting its national rights."

"Which otherwise might have been turned to furthering the betterment of its people," asserted Sakurai.

"Universal peace," continued Tokiyori, fervently, "is bound to come. The world is crying for it. Christ, Buddha, Confucius did not live in vain. The only real jeopardy *now* towards its early fulfilment is the sensation-loving jingoism of the foreign press, especially the American."

Sakurai chuckled.

"My dear fellow," said he, "the American press is a peculiar institution. Its maw is ever distended. This renders it of great aid toward what *we* may desire. It is but necessary to whisper the contrary to the truth into its huge, yellow ear, and in its voracity for news it will print the most misleading articles for public consumption in type decipherable by a blind man. Where would Japan's plans of empire be were it not for the unconscious aid rendered them by this same, all-knowing American press!"

"A unity of nations," repeated Tokiyori, "is bound to come eventually, and the successes of nations will rest with their diplomats. Therefore it behooves us to accomplish two great things in these years of preparation, Sakurai—to bend our highest faculties toward international diplomacy, and to speedily establish a trade supremacy."

"Which latter," supplemented Sakurai, dryly, "has as the first of its requirements an established national credit. The methods of our merchants, my dear Tokiyori, are not of such high caliber, I regret to say, as to induce a feeling of credit security in the hearts of the Occidentals."

"That is deplorably true," agreed Tokiyori. "Our early schooling in business matters at the hands of 'Foreigners' was so deplorably lacking in principles of uprightness and honor that our whole business ethics are corrupt. We must go to school again—with teachers of higher integrity than our early 'Foreign' preceptors, and learn that business honor is our first asset toward trade supremacy."

Sakurai smiled noncommitally, and Tokiyori reverted again to

the topic of America. "The greatest danger I see for America and possibly other nations," he said, "is a civil war of labor against capital. For labor, capital and advanced thoughts—both good and evil—are fast forming into classes, the various classes tending to become universal rather than national. In the course of evolution the individual man has progressed beyond the days when he maintained his rights and redressed his wrongs by the sword—the days when might made right; the days when judicial laws were unknown. History still repeats itself in the life of nations—for might still makes right in national disputes—yet, in time, will not the people of the nations progress intellectually until they reverse the past order of history and world conditions, which has always, even as today, found the great majority of the populace incapable of thinking individually and therefore subject to control and direction of the intellectual minority. With higher education, leading to a better philosophic development, the mentally free must eventually attain to a majority; then will the nations evolute to the degree of casting away their swords and settle their differences in a great hall of justice, subject to universal laws, to be expounded by diplomats, and by which nations shall be governed."

"Then you would make us each and all subjects of the world, with our citizen rights secondary to our world rights," remarked Sakurai.

"Though joined together as equal citizens of the world," Tokiyori replied, "yet the nation which produces the most intellectual and brilliant minds will naturally influence those of lesser mentality; and America, to the outside world, is seemingly forging ahead at a rapid pace and is likely to be recognized as authority on many questions of advanced ideas pertaining to world rights; nevertheless there is this to be remembered of the American people in every judgment upon them, they are yet children in age, and history fails to show any such wonderful empire building within the equal of what has been their national lifetime as America has achieved. It is marvelous, when you come to consider it, Sakurai."

"True as that is," replied the ambassador, "it does not alter my conviction of their shortsightedness as a nation. Take the vital question of unlimited control by the trusts which is going on here

—or, not less important, the misuse to which they put life insurance. Neither are aught but individual sources of profit. I can not conceive how any individual should be permitted to profit thus from sources vital to a nation's ownership. I, myself, Tokiyori, have no faith in the equality of man—the gods manifestly have not cast us in the same mold, nor in an equal individual right to ownership—we should be simply kine of the fields in such a calamitous case. But I do believe in the oneness of a nation—the coöperation of all its people with, and for, it."

"I agree with you on that point," said Tokiyori, quickly. "A nation should be entirely coöperative within itself—must be to attain the fulfilment of its progression. You call me an altruist, Sakurai—I plead guilty to the impeachment. But am I so impractical? A nation is a family merely—many families, if you prefer, making a great *one*. As such we must of necessity have sponsors —guardians—governing fathers. Unless they are to be mere political egoists we must conceive that such shall be as real fathers—imbued with every conception of both paternal and filial love—as the individual father of a family. Their position then is both that of father to the nation, and son of the nation; and the nation must so regard them collectively and individually. Thus we may say that a nation is its own father, and its own son. Its masses are the working bees of the nation, to whom the cry *we want work*—now so often heard—should be unknown; rather the nation's parental command should be *you must work,* for every man physically capable should be forced to work, and *working jails* should be established for the drones and non-workers unwilling to support themselves. What would you think of the parents who would so bring up their family as to permit any one or more of their children to live upon the charity of their neighbors? What would we think of the parents so inhuman as to turn a deaf ear and decline to give food and shelter to one or more of their children, who, unable to secure lucrative employment, were willing and anxious to aid in the household chores? What would we think of the more successful brothers and sisters who would stand calmly by and bear with such parents?"

"That they were *oni* and not human," asserted Sakurai, impress-

ively, "for the first thought of the loving parent is always for the weaker child; yet, how may your parents find work for, and the means to support, these unemployed children?"

"Well asked, and for answer I would say," exclaimed Tokiyori, "let the family estate be improved under the parents' direction, by means drawn from the estate's income, supplemented if necessary by demands upon the more fortunate sons and brothers; in other words, a nation should create an adequate reserve fund that would justify the planning for great national improvements capable of consuming the surplus energy of its subjects, a fund so great that under normal conditions there should be left a heavy balance to be drawn against for greater undertakings during periods of industrial depression."

"I grant you the wisdom of your argument, my dear Tokiyori," said Sakurai, "but I fear that any national effort made by this nation—likewise many of the European—to protect and assist its laboring class, will find its greatest stumbling block in its labor organizations, which selfishly guard and cherish but the ones within its fold, and who turn a deaf ear to all without its pale, forgetting that they are all brothers, born with equal God-given rights to forage for food."

"To be overcome," replied Tokiyori, "by the nations owning and directing all national necessities—industrial and otherwise—and recognizing solely the right of citizenship!"

"That would settle the question of aliens," smilingly exclaimed Sakurai, "and give the citizen the advantage."

"I truly believe that every advantage—that pertains to livelihood—should be given to the citizen," continued Tokiyori, "and that the alien should be dependent solely upon his own individual resources, and I further conceive, that when a citizen—a 'bread-winner' so called—has reached, let us say the age of sixty years, presupposing that during forty years of that time he has been a working bee in the hive, is it not in reason that he must necessarily—in his struggle for self maintenance—have in some degree aided his family, his nation? Why then should such a person not be entitled, during his few remaining years, to sufficient aid and care by those whom he has so assisted as to insure his existence?"

"That might be achieved by a system of life insurance," suggested Sakurai, "in which the individual is taxed according to his earning capacity, the sum so collected to be used for his benefit as an annuity after attaining the age limit."

"With universal peace attained," replied Tokiyori, "such a system might be put in motion. If we can minimize the national drain for militarism by merely subscribing for our share to a universal military power, and increase our national resources so that the individual taxation may be reduced to a mere income tax, which tax, or a portion of it, shall be applied to an annuity fund, which at an age limit shall entitle the assessed to a continuance of his previous average earning income during his remaining years, we will have solved the question of nationality. The only objection to your plan I at present see is that, unfortunately, life insurance, as known today, is a private corporation benefit—neither a national resource, nor a profitable venture for the people."

Sakurai leaned across the table to his guest. The subject of life insurance—not then introduced into Japan as a national factor—was a hobby of his, and (profiting by its abuses in the Occident, as he saw them) he had dreams of his own for making life insurance a national, rather than an individual, factor.

"Life insurance," he observed, impressively, "should be a protective measure for the people, to be handled by the government for the mutual benefit of both, if its true definition is to be realized. Thus the people would be wholly protected, and the government in control of that which, in case of national danger, could readily be converted into national use. And as for the trusts, well, when a handful of men are permitted to control a nation, financially and administratively, there is an end to true nationality. Of one thing I am certain, no system of trusts should ever be allowed to arise in Japan and subvert the necessities of life. Such control—if any—should vest in our government. We have too good an example of the trust evil here not to profit by it!"

"I go still further," said Tokiyori. "I say that a nation should absolutely control every public utility and luxury for the good of all. You may call this socialism, Sakurai, or what you please, but I contend that it is the true definition of the word 'Nation'."

"They have a very amusing piece of advice in England," interrupted Sakurai, "that I think answers your contention—'how to cook a hare, first catch your hare.' Seriously, I think as you on this subject, Tokiyori, but before such a national ownership will be possible the people of the nation must be schooled—not a difficult matter in our case—to a degree of national pride in such governmental projects, believing and knowing that by such national control an honest government may increase its resources and thereby relieve the masses of excessive taxation. It seems to me, Tokiyori, that such a step would be a great factor also in political purity, for it would make it incumbent upon the people to return an honest government."

He laughed lightly at the latter part of his speech, but Tokiyori knew full well the depth of feeling and national reverence that underlay Sakurai's lightness of manner and satirical method of speaking.

"My dear Sakurai," he smiled, "you are the most respecting and respectable diplomat that I know."

Sakurai threw up his hands in mock horror.

"Respectable!" he cried. "Gods of my fathers! Call me not that, my friend. Respectability is a charnal house of those human traits that time has transformed into modern hypocricies. Call me, rather, if you choose, an ambassadorial epigram—but respectable? I'd rather be an epitaph, or an epileptic!"

"It must have been a relief to you to visit Japan again and rest yourself in its simple serenity after such a trying educational course as you seem to have undergone here," laughed Tokiyori. "Is the viscountess with you now?"

"She remained in Tokyo," answered Sakurai, as he gravely considered the relative merits of Mumm and Roederer. "She will be enjoying the lotus now. I do not expect her return till the wistaria falls."

He hesitated—for all his world was aware of Tokiyori's separation from Kiku-ko—then, sipping his wine, finally ventured—

"The Countess Kiku-ko is in excellent health, I trust?"

"According to a recent letter," assured Tokiyori, without a trace of embarrassment. "My daughter, Aysia, who has been studying

at Bryn Mawr for the past year, is now with her in the interim of proceeding to France for her finishing course. As you were in Tokyo so recently, can you not enlighten me as to old friends there?"

"I fear that most of my news will be stale to you by now," responded Sakurai. "I called upon the marquis, your father, of course, and found him in wonderfully good health, although anxious concerning your probable return. He preserves the full use of all his faculties most marvelously. The countess, your wife, was absent at Biwa-ko at the time, so I was not favored with sight of her. At a dinner one evening I found myself seated between two old acquaintances—Nui-ko san and Toyo-ko san—whom I had not seen for years, Goto's famous 'double fusima,' you know. They were quite as beautifully painted as ever. Which reminds me that I dined also with the baron at Ayamè. Sakè and eels comprised the main effort of his chef. He took me into his library after dinner, and solemnly read to me from a bulky manuscript, a work on Nipponese proverbs. Since his retirement from active army life he has ample leisure for the compiling of these. I fancy that in some intermediate state—necessary, I believe, to all departed souls—Goto will pass his time in reading his proverbs to the other dwellers of the Meido-Land."

"The baron was in good health?" asked Tokiyori, who longed most to hear of Ren-ko, and yet dared not question Sakurai regarding her. He had heard of her, indirectly, several times, but the question that was always nearest his heart was never permitted to rise to his lips. His farewell with Ren-ko had been complete and entire—a "thought life" was the only intercourse open to them. Because of this he dared not return to Japan; because of it he thought all the more of her with each waking hour.

Sakurai sensed something of what was passing in his guest's mind, and determined suddenly to relieve it. He knew somewhat of the attributed cause to Tokiyori's differences with Kiku-ko, but with this opportunity he felt he might safely venture on the outskirts of unsound ground. Moreover, curiosity compelled him to the hazard.

"Goto is in excellent health," he replied. "Stouter, I should say,

than ever. I passed a most agreeable evening with him and his daughter, Lady Ren-ko. What a lovely woman she is, Tokiyori, and as perfect in intellect as she is in beauty. She spoke but seldom, but when she did her words were to me as trumpet calls to a soldier. I recall the conversation had turned on the subject of Taro Goto's successes with his emigration enterprise. Taro, between ourselves, is, I understand, greatly in love with Lady Ren-ko, although his sighings for her have, apparently, failed of an impression."

"As I say," he continued, "Lady Ren-ko and I were speaking of Taro and his emigration concerns. 'It is the brightness of the candle that fortells darkness,' said Lady Ren-ko to me in a low voice —the baron being occupied in conversation with my wife—'the seductive calm that foreruns the typhoon.' 'Why do you call Taro's enterprise that?' I asked, amusedly, although I confess I was interested also. 'Because it so exactly typifies both,' she answered, without hesitation. 'He is today unloading hundreds upon hundreds of our supposed laboring class upon an alien country, because of the fact that they can, and will, labor more cheaply than foreign workmen. As yet the 'Foreigner' appears not to have awakened to what this means, but how will they regard us when they feel that our people are taking the food from their mouths, and gaining knowledge not to be used for the country that is feeding, teaching and supporting them, *but for us?* Can you see other in the eventual outcome than perilous race hatred, and probable war?'"

Lord Sakurai lowered his voice, and leaned across the table toward Tokiyori, impressively.

"I confess, Tokiyori," said he, "that I had never viewed this matter in that light before, but, from what she said, I had my interest awakened to the extent of looking into it more closely. I am convinced that America is on the verge of a great social revolution, although what form—violent or diplomatic—it will take, I am unable to conjecture. Everywhere labor in America is sullen and disgruntled with capital, and it needs but very little to inflame the whole mass of the nation's workers into one seething, angry, dangerous mob. Capital sees this also, and will use the

Japanese cheap laborers as a pretext for turning aside, for the time, the wrath of the masses. Thus we shall be the sufferers—the scape-goats. Sooner or later, if Taro Goto's business—and that of similar concerns that have started up recently—are not curtailed, we shall have an exclusion act in force against our people here—or war."

Tokiyori had been listening intently to the first part of Sakurai's narrative of his dinner at Goto's, and although his host's peroration had not escaped him, had been turning over and over in his mind a picture of Ren-ko as he had last seen her, in the snow at Ayamè, and as she must have looked when talking with Sakurai.

"When did you say that you heard this prophecy from the lips of—of Goto's daughter?" he asked.

"About three months ago," answered Sakurai, slightly surprised. "Yes, I recall it was on my wife's birthday, which is on the fifteenth day of the Iris month. Why, my dear fellow?"

Tokiyori collected himself.

"Merely that I was wondering why no such views had been brought before the Diet?" he rejoined.

"There is a report now to that effect—made under my supervision—to the Diet," explained Sakurai. "What action they may decide to take upon it you can conjecture as well as I—I fear none, at the present. But I see that our dinner is a thing of the past; shall we not adjourn for coffee and a cigar?"

Tokiyori arose with his host.

"I think not, if you will excuse me," said he. "I have another engagement this evening that I dare not neglect. I shall hope to see you at the embassy tomorrow."

They bade one another goodnight and separated, Sakurai toward the club's smoking room, and Tokiyori toward its entrance. Under the portals he paused, then descending the brown-stone steps, turned into Connecticut Avenue, crossing a nearby square on his way to his hotel.

Arrived there, he sought his rooms at once, dismissing his man who awaited him. Then, drawing a chair up to an open bay window, he sat gazing out across the lamp-lit streets of the silent, almost deserted city.

Presently he arose, and crossing to an escretoire, drew from it a dispatch case. Opening this, he extracted one of several red morocco leathered diaries. He turned back its leaves until he came to an entry, and read:

JUNE 15TH: I HAVE COME TO SEE THAT MY FORMER BELIEF IN THE ULTIMATE VALUE TO US OF LABOR EMIGRATION WAS ERRONEOUS. OUR PEOPLE ARE LITERALLY INUNDATING THE PACIFIC SLOPE STATES, CUTTING PRICES UNDER NATIVE WORKMEN TO GAIN EMPLOYMENT. THE MINDS OF THE MASSES OF THE COUNTRY ARE ALREADY INFLAMED AGAINST CAPITAL, AND CAPITAL, SEEING THE OPPORTUNITY WE AFFORD THEM FOR TURNING ASIDE THE WRATH OF LABOR, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEIZE ON SUCH A PRETEXT. IT WILL BE REPRESENTED TO THE AMERICAN WORKINGMAN THAT NOT CAPITAL, BUT CHEAP ORIENTAL LABOR, IS TAKING THE FOOD OUT OF HIS MOUTH—AND NOT BY THE EXERCISE OF GREATER SKILL, BUT BY THE ABILITY TO LIVE FOR LESS THAN THE OCCIDENTAL POSSIBLY CAN. THE OUTCOME IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. A FEW GRAINS OF SUCH POWDER—PRESSURE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON GOVERNMENTAL LEGISLATURE AND THE PRESIDENT—AND, WHIFF! AN ULTIMATUM TO NIPPON, AND WAR!

He replaced the diary, locked and replaced the dispatch box and locked the escretoire.

He recrossed the room and gazed out across the silent street once more. Suddenly it seemed to him that the city faded into a nothingness, and that a drawn veil was lifted from his eyes. In all the vast universe that stretched before him there seemed but two people—Ren-ko and himself; she flashing thought upon thought to him, he recording these and acting upon them. At Ayamè she had told Sakurai that which, *on that self same day,* he had written in his diary. He seemed to realize suddenly that she was living his life for him—in thought—in how many different governing thoughts he could only conjecture. Altruist, dreamer, man of intellect as he was, his mind suddenly descended to the practical in a way that would have amused Sakurai, and he determined—impelled by his inherent human weaknesses—that that which belonged to her *spiritually* should be hers *actually* as well.

"I am now in my forty-fourth year," he mused, "and, saving for an all-short boyhood, I think I have never known a real happiness but once. Long before attaining my majority, cares and responsibilities seldom expected of matured men were laid upon my shoulders; since then I have never known, I think, an hour's respite from care, responsibility and sorrow. I have toiled but to see my successes accredited to others, my apparent failures—and the failures of others—stamped indelibly against my own record. Whether my father, or the Diet, the results for me have always been the same—toil, work and conception on my part; success and popular recognition and acclaim for them. Then came a dark night when Nippon's danger stood close by her elbow, when the Nightless Street whispered secrets that the winds never bore past the O-mon of the Flower Quarter, so that only by lying, treachery and fraud might Nippon be saved. A woman's heart was at stake —to be won by deeds so foul that none could be expected to perform them—*saving one, I.* And then it was I found, amidst all the filth and mire, the only joy my life was permitted to know—a lotus grew from the mud; I plucked it. In the garden of life the gods have planted for each of us his flower, to take or leave—the lotus grew for me."

Suddenly some words—his own—returned to him, words spoken over pure, white snow that covered the walks of a villa—the villa of Ayamè:

—it may be that the gods, because of so great an interpretation of their own loves, will grant that we commingle in thought—

It had been granted.

"Thought is but the better life after all," he said aloud; "the flowerings of the garden of life. Chrysanthemum or lotus, one cultured guardedly in rich soil, the other wild-flowering in foul mud, yet emblem of all purity. Each perfect in its place in the garden, but it is the call of the lotus, in the rustling of its leaves, that the gardener, in the hours of darkness, hears."

He picked up some time-tables that lay on the desk top, and consulted them, then rang for his servant.

"Pack my things," he ordered. "We leave for San Francisco on the midnight express."

"To remain there, sir?" queried the servant with the respectful familiarity of the valet.

"No; till this day week when the steamer leaves for Japan," replied Tokiyori.

XXV

NAKED, UPON THE AIR

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

SEPTEMBER came to refresh Japan, touching the veins of the Mukojima foliage with cool caressing fingers, damp with Autumnal rain, while the dark Sumida awoke from its summer sleep, slipping along among the bordering cherry trees, like a sluggish serpent.

Early afternoon had waned, and with it the gentle showers had ceased, so that the grounds of Ayamè lay glistening like a blaze of jewels where a golden sun lingered on the raindrops. A lane of burnt umber tints ran mingling with a thousand variant greens on this palette of nature, untouched here by the scalpel of man, and the scent of *mokusei* was damp and sweet as the breathing of a little child—a little lisping child with the bloom still fresh upon it.

Within his yashiki Goto snoozed peacefully, a confused mass of writing on a table before him. Recently, as related to Tokiyori by Viscount Sakurai, Goto had begun the elaboration of an intended stupendous volume of native proverbs—a prodigious work that seemingly grew the further from completion the more its author labored at it. Every now and then the baron would solemnly announce to his intimates that shortly the publication of his magnus opus would occur, hinting darkly that certain selected sayings of the Flower Quarter—personally and laboriously collected—would astound the world. However, the work still remained in manuscript form, and if its appearance was a matter of conjecture, it had the present value of serving to occupy pleasingly the baron's time and thoughts.

Without, Ren-ko was loitering about the lane. A restlessness had unaccountably come to her that day, presaging events—events feared, she knew not why, and yet longed for. Her thoughts, ever of one across the great seas, were now tinged with a flush of guilt. She had transmitted mentally to him things that she knew to be of the utmost importance—whether such had been received she knew not, only hoped. A month ago she had sent him another thought, impelled by the aching void in her heart, against her knowledge of what was right. Had he received that? Would he answer?

She turned about, as though under the urgence of some unseen hand, and saw a stranger upon the walk. He was standing motionless, wrapt in contemplation of her. His head was bared so that she noted his hair was heavily tinged with grey; his features those of a man at once sad, and happy in his sadness. As he started to approach her, it needed not the slight limp observable in his walk to tell her who he was.

"Takè san!" she sobbed softly, her joy welling up in voice and eyes; "Takè san!"

He came swiftly to her, his arms outstretched. So perfect an understanding, psychic in its divination, existed between them, there was no need for formality of social garb.

"You knew me?" he asked, his cup of happiness full.

"Would a poet need eyes to see the visions of which he writes?" she answered, using the very words he had once spoken to her in The Jewel River. "The afternoon is perfect because of you, and the shadows are holding back from their lengthening that I may see you."

He led her to a seat beneath a hanging willow—that same spot where, when last they had been together, he had told her that their life must, in future, be in their thoughts alone.

"The shadows of the afternoon are short yet," said he, "but before long they will have lengthened into the chill of night. It is the kindly veil dusk draws over the knees of day, bent o'er the sacrificial altar. I have come to feel, Ren-ko san, that so little of this life is guessed—how may we hope to know the after! A thought—a breath—and the careless sleeve of night and morn has brushed us from the pathway! Only a narrow thought strip separates you and I from the Island of Life—yet it is wider than the cycles—naught but the bridge of love alone may span it and the guide-rope is in your hands. There are lands where the sun never sets—where neither gods, nor fiends, may yea or nay the day—where wild doves throat their loves at will. It is these I shall seek, Flower Heart, for it has come to me that I may no longer waste the gift of love the gods laid in my cradle. So, after the lapse of years, have I come from the long shadows to journey into the sunlight with you."

She regarded him with rapture too great for words, her expression one of triumphant happiness. Suddenly, this changed into one of consternation and horror. This love, as he had told her, was lent, not sent, and now he had placed the guide-rope in her hands.

"A journey?" said she. "Nay, rather a flight—a flight under cover of darkness from the creditors one dares not face on the morrow. Life's debts are an inheritance, Takè san, an heirloom bequeathed to us by our own evolution, to be paid by each for the

furtherance of all. Oft times the usery seems inhumanly exorbitant, and our best talents unmarketable at their true value; yet, in the very losses of their barter do we march into the line of the next reincarnation of our world. We are but the accredited shopkeepers of those talents, laden at our births with an overwhelming indebtedness, and according to their disposal shall not only we, but all mankind, progress. It is a sorry merchant who will not stay and fight impending bankruptcy, Takè san—my merchant of the fishes."

"Yet there is love to reckon with, Ren-ko san—my Lotus!"

"Love! What love? Do you refer to bodily passion? Or do you refer to that human—almost divine—comprehension which alone the darkness can feel, can see, can understand, can know the thrill of each act of self-sacrifice which raises the willing victim one rung higher on the rack? Ah! such a love as that—I thank the gods—is mine. The perfect love, which gnawing day and night, reminds me by the very constancy of its pain, that that which I love is suffering too—suffering every conceivable torture. And it is this hallowed passion which makes possible the union of our souls, Takè san."

"A life of suffering! Ren-ko san. What right has God, or man, to encumber us beyond our strength?" he demanded. "Has some force but procreated this world as a holiday pit where it may gloat on helpless suffering? My nature cries out against this fiend of fiends who would destroy that which, in sportive mood, it made for jest! Neither man, nor God, has a right to lay a finger on the love that springs unbidden from the soul, for that is the life of the world—the world itself. Deny it if you dare—Flower Soul—my breath!"

"Your cavil is that of the craven who cries against his general's right to demand the seemingly useless sacrifice of the forlorn hope he is ordered to march with," she answered bravely, "but not the motto of the man I love. We can not lay aside our debts; they are not ours so to dispose of. The gods alone are permitted to shift the burdens from one of us to the other, we can but receive them on the knees of the gods. Our courageous acceptance of them is that love, which is the breath of the world, my Takè san. No thrill

of material contact can create such an undying sensualism as that! From such a love, my beloved, I have come to believe, will the salvation of our people be worked—for, as you once told me, your work and honor was in doing for others, mine in aiding you therein. We are but the pioneers of a greater nation, my Takè san—pioneers, because while realizing and striving for the better, we are still custom-chained to the worse. No great onward movement but must have its martyrs for charter-members. Would you take that love, which is my breath, from me to defile it, Takè san?"

His head was bowed, and save for his labored breathing, he stood as one entranced. She took his hand and led him gently down the shaded walk, among the lengthening shadows, and into the last rays of the sun that flooded the curving bridge. Beyond lay the Cherry Avenue, and the road through Tokyo to Shiba. Above, crows were flighting in that direction.

"The crows are cawing now on their nightly homeward flight to the Shiba woodlands," said she, "for the heart of their mother forest calls them to nest. If the crows came not, the heart of the woodlands would be silent and sad. Poor heart! your children do not leave *you* aching. You are of Shiba, my Takè—an errant crow for whom its nest is awaiting; there lies your work, and your honor. I am of the cherry blooms, that float hither and thither on the air of heaven. A duty has whispered to me—I go to America, shortly, to Taro Goto. Sayonara—O Gardener of the Garden of my Life!"

The morning of that day, the great, gloomy jail of Tokyo had disgorged one—once Tanaka of The Jewel River.

He had passed along the Nightless Street in the early forenoon, watching the scenes about what once was his, now the property of another. A man, evidently from his air their present proprietor, fat, ungainly and indolent, came forth from the entrance that led to the interior courtyard, and leaned against the lintel of the doorway, puffing his pipe, and watching idly the few sight-seers on the street. Tanaka's prison-dimmed eyes regarded him with envy, and his prison-nurtured heart, black as the corners

of his cell, whispered to him its daily word of vengeance. He left the Nightless Street, Shibawards.

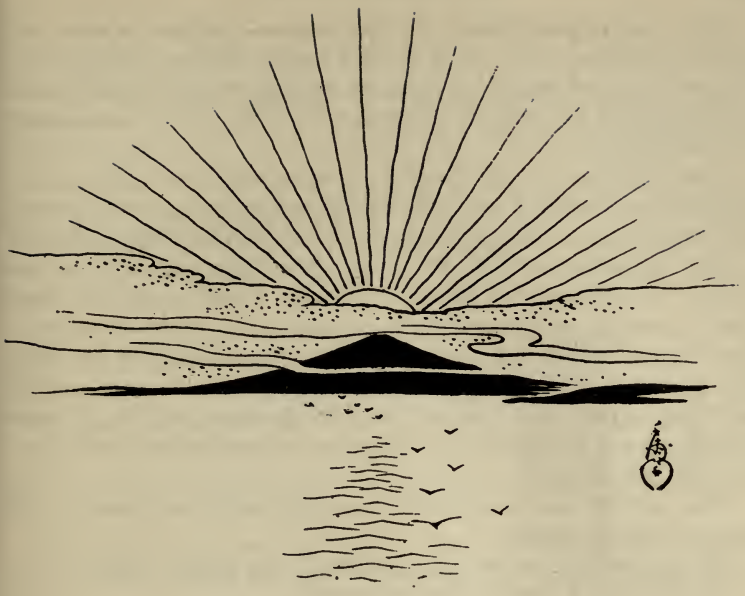
There, in a hidden glade of the woodlands that led to the path of tombs, where mould the Tokugawas, he lingered throughout the afternoon, watching, ever watching the O-mon of Shima, and the little besso beyond. As night was about to fall, he heard the sounds of a 'ricksha, and perceived one stop before the latter place. Its passenger dismounted, followed by the 'ricksha man carrying his hand baggage—Tanaka distinctly noted who it was —discharged the 'ricksha and entered the gateway of the villa. Then Tanaka drew a happy sigh for the first time in six long years, and glided silently toward the outskirts of the woodlands.

Presently the figure stood in the yashiki doorway, evidently asking questions of one who answered his summons. The servant pointed toward the grey castle. The figure turned from the house and walked thoughtfully in the direction indicated.

Tanaka stepped forth onto the roadway, and quickened his pace. As he gained upon the figure, his shadow fell across the thought-wrapped man, who looked over his shoulder. The flash of a knife—and Tanaka struck; then fled for the woodlands, reaching their shelter almost as soon as the tottering body fell to the roadway.

The gateman of Shima, dozing just outside its entrance, was awakened by the falling of the body. He stretched his arms, rubbed his eyes and arose. He had been about to scratch his chin as habitual, but stopped, his eyes starting from his head as he perceived the fallen man. He went toward him and bent over—it was a long time since bodies had lain without the O-mon of Shima. Then he jumped suddenly to his feet, and flung his arms wildly above his head.

"Gods of the house I serve!" he cried. "It is my young master, Lord Tokiyori!"



XXVI

FALLING LEAVES

Whether at Naisháṕur or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

In the library of the Yashiki were Lord Yo-Akè and Kiku-ko; he, grown very infirm and in need of constant little attentions, she, delighting in administering to his wants. The years of separation from Tokiyori had brought to her, time for thought—thought aided and suggested by the father. This had resulted in an understanding.

They were conversing of Tokiyori—a subject scarce ever absent from their lips. Lord Yo-Akè had arrived at that age when the hesitancy of caste to display its natural emotions is no longer heeded; when wisdom has arrived at the belief in the nothingness of everything.

"Life," affirmed Lord Yo-Akè, reminiscently, to Kiku-ko, "is a golgotha of dead leaves. Our hopes are strewn on the ground. The evening air is chilling, autumn will be with us soon, Kiku-kò."

She answered nothing, but arose and crossed over to an open shoji. The twilight was fading into night. From across the woodlands came the gentle tinkling of temple bells—from Sengakuji—for it was the hour of evening prayer at the shrines of the forty-seven ronin. Both listened while the gentle tones were audible, and then as they died into the heart of the silent verdure, Kiku-ko tightly closed the shoji, and returned to her father's side. Lord Yo-Akè stifled a sigh.

"The legend was incomplete," he murmured to himself; "the legend was incomplete."

"Do you believe in the gods, father?" she asked, suddenly.

"Do not you, Kiku-ko?" he answered.

"I pray to them each night of my life," said she, in a low voice, "for light, and forgiveness for my darkness. It is by the andon of my husband I have come to see what light may be, and I need its aid now more than ever. I only ask of the gods the return of its glimmer—is that too much to ask? Sometimes I wonder if there are gods."

"The portals of life," answered Lord Yo-Akè, "are invisible. Who knows what lies beyond that which we can not see? Dawn, born blushing, slips unconsciously into the day of what we think light and sight; before we are aware, dusk passes like a watchman to put out our lights, and night enshrouds us. If another dawn there be, who knows? or who may tell us of it? Yet, if I could but believe! Could but believe!"

Silence reigned whilst the room began to grow dark. Suddenly Lord Yo-Akè became aware of the low voice of his daughter, praying. He turned his head, and saw that she was kneeling in supplicating attitude before the ihai to his wife, whispering the

cry of her aching heart to the spirit-mother of the man she had come to long for.

"O Mother of the Light of my Life," prayed Kiku-ko, "stretch forth your hand from the Meido-Land, and lead my husband to me."

She ceased, and it seemed that a great stillness had fallen upon the room. Presently the shrine lamp went out, and a heavy darkness descended. A faint rustle—as though a something crept through the room like the passing of a soul; then, again, lifeless silence.

Steps sounded in the passage; a lantern glimmered, and men entered bearing something which they reverently laid down, and then withdrew. A shudder passed through her; intuitively, she knew that her prayer had been answered; that her husband had returned to her. Quietly and composedly she arose, lighted an andon, and knelt beside him, uncovering the still features. A great peace had settled upon them.

Suddenly she was aware that the father, whom she had forgotten, was standing beside her. He stretched his old, shaking hands forth.

"Gods, now take thou thy servant from this toil of pain," he whispered in a dry, trembling voice; "for mine eyes have seen the evening of my house. The leaves are fallen from the tree—it stands uncovered. The fault was mine; the atonement—his."

With the morning of the next day, Kiku-ko ceased from her constant vigil beside the body of her husband, and sought her father's rooms to make amends for her natural neglect of him. She found him confined to his futon—the reaction of the shock having prostrated him—but in full possession of his faculties, calm in his sorrow.

As he greeted her he indicated a traveling bag in a corner of the room, it was monogrammed in silver with Tokiyori's initials.

"It was sent over from the besso this morning," said he. "I had it placed here in order not to disturb you. You had best take it to your own apartments, Kiku-ko, and examine it."

A feeling of new-found joy, even in her sadness, came to

Kiku-ko. If his bag had been left at the besso, he himself must have gone there—to her first, before seeking his father.

"Nay," she replied, "let us examine it here together, father."

She went to the bag and returned with it to the side of his futon; kneeling, she opened it. It proved to contain such necessities of quick travel as one most needs for the moment, and several red morocco-leathered diaries. She laid these beside the futon, opened one, and read:

". . . A truth is not an actuality until some soul has humanized it, embodied it—but I think, nevertheless, that it was always a truth. If my thesis is correct my Bushido was as much a fact as that of Saito, for which he died at Satsuma. I, therefore, deduce that Bushido has its two distinct manifestations, spiritual and material. In either phase I confess to a loathing for, and admiration of, its requirements, as contradictory as its manifestations themselves.—Altruism is a natural factor under its spiritual phase; egoism a characteristic of its material manifestation. My own material cosmos—an effeminate desire for sympathetic affection and comprehension; a most pronounced horror of pain; an antipathy of the strongest against that which creates suffering—became effaced when affined to the spiritual Bushido, so that, despite the loathing for the task set me by my father in the Yoshiwara, I was enabled to undertake it with a true Pantheistic disinterestedness.

"Removed from the environment of my act I find that I am able to review all persons and sentiments attaching to it with a calm introspection. It was never a marvel to me how Kiku-ko, whom I knew to be inbred with romanticism, could prefer as a matter of individual selection her cousin Saito to myself; yet, it must be admitted, that all unconsciously she did me therein a supreme moral injustice. Saito, an exponent of material Bushido, represented to her all that stood for chivalry and valor, the creed of our forefathers; while I, with my poor personal attractions and studiousness, appeared in every way the last one within whom a spirit of chivalry could be found to have a habitat. Heredity is the strongest factor in our make-up when we do not permit our mentalities to evolute sufficiently to overcome its inheritance. Un-

derstanding Kiku-ko's psychology in this light I can also appreciate her view point. What she could neither see, nor comprehend, was that my nature craved for a sympathetic and affectionate understanding. The results of such an intercourse as hers and mine could not be otherwise than befell.

"When I undertook the task of spying upon the plans of Ikeda through the medium of his daughter, I did so with every feeling of revulsion. My material personality revolted at the idea; my spiritual Bushido made the duty possible. If from the first she showed me that complete comprehension that Kiku-ko lacked, feeding with each word my intellectuality, any sentiment I may have then entertained for her was entirely subconscious. Our intimacy was but the carrying out of a duty by each—she to blind my eyes to the plottings of her father, I to gain information of those plottings for the salvation of our country. Our real liaison has been one of purest mentality and intellectuality. I do not condemn Kiku-ko for her lack of understanding—but, oh! what a world of misfortune both to her life, and to mine, might have been saved could she have learned to look upon my spiritual Bushido with as just eyes as she comprehended, and loved Saito's material Bushido! . . ."

Kiku-ko dropped the diary upon the futon. The written words of her dead husband came to her as a shock—but they also came to her as a blessed light by which her eyes were opened. It was by the glimmer of the lantern of his life that she was made to see. For the first time it came to her that there could be a spiritual infidelity as well as a material one—and that all her life with him she had been guilty of the former. Stunned, she arose, and with bent head quitted Lord Yo-Akè's apartment.

Lord Yo-Akè lay musing. Then his faculty of mentally assimilating that which his mortal eyes had not seen, painted to him the events of that last day in his son's life. The unexpected return, unannounced; the bag at the besso; the death of Tokiyori; the diaries; all told him as clearly as though he had accompanied his son throughout the momentous day. He saw the landing—the hurried visit to Ayamè—the meeting of Ren-ko and Tokiyori—the

splendid and awful renunciation of a human soul of its life—and he rejoiced that the mortal sufferings of his son were past; that the tortured soul of the boy whom he loved more dearly than aught, saving his country, was now gathered to the peace of the mother-bosom in the Meido-Land.

Haphazard, he picked up one of the diaries and read:

". . . Constant increase and expansion of international commerce must be the guiding policy of our country; a supreme control of such to be the eventual result.

"Toward which we must gain, and maintain, recognition as a world power by land and sea, and advance this to the degree of, at least, one of the three great nations of the world. . . ."

". . . The acquisition of our national status has been commanded solely by the sword. Today we are but a vaunted evolution of caveman, of prehistoric half-beast, for we still maintain our moral ascendency over our fellow men by the same methods as our remote ancestors. I have often heard it expressed as a contra-argument to disarmament of nations—that war is a necessity to relieve the world periodically of over-population, and that without militarism—honor—the honor in which our whole code of ethics should be *(but is not)* founded—would cease as an existent social factor. I clearly see that scientific advancement (higher civilization) is more effectually taking care of surplus population than ever war did; and as to the latter argumentum Bushido is the answer absolute and final ipso facto. What then must take the place of this material throwing away of the samurai's sword? —Trade, the Crow's Roadway to the City of Desire. And how may it be applied?

"With the reduction of national armament; a nation's most salient weapon, as well as its most vulnerable point, will be its commercial standing, its financial credit in the concourse of nations. The weapon of progress figuratively is—like its counterpart of Justice—a two-edged sword. The obverse edge of the offensive weapon will be commercial ostracism—that developed stone-age weapon whereby modern humanitarian nations may control an offending one. In this isolation will be found the most effectual means of punishing recalcitrant nations. . . ."

". . . Our government should first realize the fact that it is in itself but a national expression of the welfare of the individual, and the individual must be schooled to have confidence and regard for the government. My country must control all monopolies to her own self-support, by governmental acquisition of all industries that may be—or tend to become—either a public necessity or luxury, thus precluding the formation of private trusts, thereby increasing the government's resources, and reducing the direct taxation of the individual.

"Our greatest asset is the Bushidic loyalty and oneness of our people, engendered in the belief that the actual and executive head of our nation is our father spiritual as well as temporal. Our posterity must be schooled in this belief—instilling in them that degree of national pride whereby the voice of the government shall be to them an abiding and sacred law, ever working for the generations to follow. Whether nation or individual, our aim and desire should be to anticipate the advancement of those to follow, that we may live as long as the world itself in those who come after us. . . ."

" . . . Whatever adverse judgment I may have merited from my country and family, let this at least stand to my credit—I have obeyed my father's last words to me to go forth and find the Roadway to the City of Desire.

"The fulfilment of Nakahara's prophecy I read thus:

"His City of Desire is the World's Commerce; his Ronin, the Trader; the Roadway—Korea and the sweep of the Pacific. So I see the solution written in the Stars.

"Great Britain and we are analagous—a small group of islands. Her revenues, largely, India; ours was meant to be China. The Atlantic traffic is controlled by Great Britain mostly, Europe slightly, and discarded by America; the virgin Pacific—through America's neglect—can be ours. The trade control of Europe with China and the Orient can be attained through Korea—the pivot of the world's coming trade.

"Korea, the Roadway to the City of Desire, is our birthright. The powers must be prevented from partitioning China. The dawn approaches. . . ."

". . . Though I find that all nations have their City of Desire centered in the world's commerce; yet there is a Universal City of Desire to which each nation should aspire, that they may light the roadway to the Empire of Universal Humanitarianism, which will give to each one of the world's untold millions an ownership in equity in all material happiness. . . ."

All during that day Lord Yo-Akè had remained encouched, perusing carefully each entry of the diaries. Toward the close of the day he laid these aside, and for a long time fell into a deep meditative state. Dusk had fallen and the andon stars of night were lighting, when suddenly he half arose and gave expression to his thoughts: "Oh, my son! thou hast torn the misty film from my eyes and shown me—that Japan, with Occidental knowledge engrafted upon her ancient Oriental wisdom, is capable of what I had never dared dream for her in my most sanguine imaginings.

"Thy words have cleared the Roadway to the City of Desire of its brambles and hidden pitfalls.

"I now see the possible boundaries of an empire greater than ever empire has been. How Japan may become the great nation of the future—not by superior armaments, nor alone through keener statecraft, or vaster finances, *but by the wisdom of profiting by the bigoted ignorance and blind neglect of the Occident.* And whilst the externals of our governmental system may be shown to the Occident, our national psychology must remain hidden from the ken of the west.

"Korea must be ours, to be made the hub of the coming Trade Wheel of the World. Wars—necessary, unavoidable wars—must be fought to establish Japan's prestige over China; but peace must follow—a universal peace—and when the supremacy of arbitration is finally established over carnage, then Japan's acquired diplomatic training and practice must be such as will render her invincible."

Without, on the castle walk, the sounds of many feet told of a stream of callers, for word had gone through byway and alley that Tokiyori Yo-Akè had returned to his native land, and lay dead in the castle of his fathers.

Lord Yo-Akè raised his eyes to the ceiling of his room.

"Said the samurai I follow," he quoted, softly.

He stretched his arms out as though in supplication.

"My house hath seen its evening," he continued; "the ihai to my wife is dark. Its lamp burning ever these forty years—that hath gone out but twice, each time at the home coming of my son —is dead. The shrine shall remain in darkness, its lamp forever unlighted, for I think Ume-Ko's soul hath gone from its abode to clasp our son to the mother bosom in the Meido-Land—O, son of my soul! Son of my soul!

"O, Nippon, land of the newer, greater gods! Thou country that wast nurtured in the womb of my wife when my son wast there conceived, that was suckled with him at her breast—what a jewel shalt thou be in the diadem of the future, and what a flower in the chaplet on the brow of the world! I see the waterways so laden with thy shipping, that it seems as though the great seas were crowded with myriad resting gulls, all ready to spread wing and fly to the end of the earth. I see thy cities great and beautiful, thy countries fair and endless. I see suns upon the horizons, upon the eastern, the western, the northern, the southern; and they are ever-rising suns, emblem of our country. I see thy people supreme in might, wisdom, humanity and loyalty; the arts and merchandise of the world flowing to and from thy shores. I see thee, O, beloved country, for whom my son lived and died, the nation of all, the Trade-Rome of the future—vaster than the vastness of all Rome; yet though riches beyond the avarice of Rome shall flow to thee, thy people must never become corrupt by the fiends of luxury, idleness and licentiousness.

"O, Universal City of Desire! Thou, whose roadway is only to be followed under the guidance of those three stars, Vigilance, Progression and Humility, I see thee now the final goal of not one nation alone, but of the whole world. Thou godlike city, that will be the temple of all justice, righteousness, and truth, wherein there shall be neither Christian, nor Shintoist, Buddhist, nor Mohammedan, but one great, pure light embracing all in the one moral essence—the betterment of mankind. What matter by what individual code each nation shall strive to attain to this,

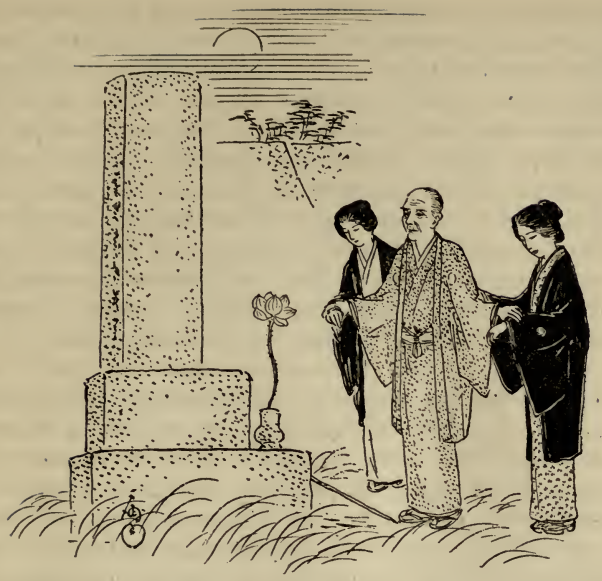
whether it be through the Christian virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity—or through the enlightenment of Buddhism, if they but reach the gateway and enter.

"Thou art gone from me, O, son of mine—into the land where awaits thy mother. Thy sufferings are o'er; those whom thou loved, who loved thee, will know thee no more. Thy work is done—but, oh, thrice cursed be the foul hand that laid thee low!

"Yet, why should I such curses invoke when thou, thyself, wouldst have been the first to say—peace. The leaves have fallen from the rose, so ruthlessly cut down; but the gardener, gathering the petals, knows that their aroma will still live."

He ceased and sank back upon the futon. Darkness had fallen; from Sengakuji came the nightly tinkling of temple bells that called to prayer beside the graves of the seven-and-forty.

"Night is an impenetrable drape to mortal eyes," murmured Lord Yo-Akè, "but the voices of those we loved may call and answer through it."



XXVII

ON THE KNEES OF THE GODS

Listen again. One evening at the Close
Of Ramazán, as the better Moon arose,
In the old Potter's Shop I stood alone
With the Clay Population round in rows.—OMAR KHAYYÁM.

AN AUGUST even-fall of the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety lingered about Biwa-ko, the red sun waning behind Ishiyama, yet pausing in its flight to touch the mighty walls of Moto castle. Throughout the day rain had fallen, but a late afternoon sun had dried the moisture, saving where it still lingered in the corners of turret and keep like tears in the eyes of a weeper.

Japan, the ever-changing, had turned on the juggernaut wheels of the years, the fortunes of her sons and daughters revolving spoke-like from the hub of her national policies. Among those affected by time was the family of Yo-Akè, the Lords of Dawn, whose heiress was now wedded to a rising young officer of the Imperial Navy, Captain Midzuhara, destined to play a prominent part in the history of his country. He was the same lad who, when a boy, had rescued for the child, who is now his wife, a toy boat from difficulties in a pond at Shima, and had been rewarded by the patronage of Lord Yo-Akè, who secured his appointment to a cadetship at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis. Aysia and her husband now resided at the Shiba besso.

Kiku-ko still remained in attendance upon old Lord Yo-Akè, who had removed his residence permanently to Moto—his son being buried there. She had but just now received a letter from Aysia, detailing Tokio news, extracts from which she was reading to the marquis. A large part of Kiku-ko's daily vocations now consisted in such duties, for the failing years of his life had brought also failing sight to the old nobleman, so that his dimmed, time-worn eyes could scarce discern the forms of those about him.

"Tokyo is pleasant this month, though warm," read Kiku-ko to her father from the just received letter from Aysia. "We hope soon—if Midzuhara secures leave of absence—to visit you and grandfather at Moto. Last week Midzuhara received news of his appointment to command the Kai-ten Kan, lately commissioned. He, as well as I, is greatly elated.

"Last week we dined at Ayamè—a dinner given by the baron to several of his friends to celebrate the publication of his book of proverbs. He read us a few after the meal, and said there were many more he would like to read, but dared not. I am sure they must have been dreadful. He spoke to us also of his nephew, and his nephew's wife, who are returning home from America. It seems that Mr. Taro Goto is retiring from the Nippon Land and Emigration Company at the solicitation of Lady Ren-ko. Presumably we shall see something of them in Tokyo during the winter.

"Such a weird and unpleasant thing happened yesterday that I

scarce know how to write it. Midzuhara was returning afoot, late in the evening, through the Shiba woods, having been to Shima. As he left the castle he was stopped by a stranger who asked if the Yo-Akè family were in residence there now. Upon Midzuhara's informing him to the contrary, he thanked him and withdrew. Midzuhara was much struck by the man's dejected mien; he said it was as that of some lost spirit seeking an unfound atonement. Later that night a man was found dead just before the O-mon of the castle; he had committed seppuku. The authorities were notified and his identity established. He was the murderer, Tanaka. It may have been an expiation; if so I pray the gods will receive his soul. It is so father would have wished us to pray.

"The lotus will shortly be out now. I went into the castle grounds today; the ponds were alive with buds."

Kiku-ko ceased reading and laid the letter aside. For some little time silence reigned between her and her father, each occupied with thoughts invoked by the letter. Presently Lord Yo-Akè spoke in a quavering old voice:

"The lotus here should be out by now, Kiku-ko," said he.

"It is all in buds yet," she answered.

"I wish you would go to the pond and see if none have flowered," he requested with the pertinacity of age.

Each day for the past fortnight had Kiku-ko patiently sought the pond at similar biddings from him.

"Dear father," she remonstrated, "it is but a few short hours since I visited the pond, and it showed naught but buds."

"One may have flowered since," objected Lord Yo-Akè, obstinately.

With a sigh Kiku-ko arose to comply, and after her departure Lord Yo-Akè sat musing.

"He so loved a lotus," he reasoned to himself, "that if a rain of love could make them flower, I think my boy would deluge them with such. It rained but now—who knows? There may be lotus; no flower would resist the love he bore it. I feel the lotus will come to Moto for him today."

He sat thinking on this until Kiku-ko re-entered the room.

"See what a beautiful flower, father," she exclaimed, holding forth a lotus in full bloom. "I must have overlooked it when last at the pond."

She placed the flower in his trembling hands, and he fondled it tenderly.

"We will take it to Tokiyori's grave," said he. "Help me to arise, Kiku-ko."

"Nay, I will take it for you," said she.

The old man held tightly to his treasure.

"We," he insisted, with the petulance of age.

"But, father," she remonstrated, "you have not left the house for months past. It will overtax you to walk to the grave."

"Strength will be given me," he asserted, "to bear a lotus to my son. Your arm, my daughter."

Perforce, she complied, and, tottering feebly, he finally managed by help of arm and cane to reach the grave-side. Night was drawing in as they knelt and laid the flower upon the shrine. Across the water came welling the great bell of Miidera, low, solemn, musical strokes lulling finally into the silence of sleep on the bosom of placid Biwa.

Through the dusk, one other—a woman—approached the shrine, kneeling reverently near them, yet so silently that the engrossed father and wife of the dead noted not. Lord Yo-Akè, his prayers said, raised his head, and Kiku-ko arose to assist him to his feet. As she did so, she observed the other devotee. It was the woman who had ruined her life, had striven to steal her husband's affections, the "brothel woman"—all these Kiku-ko thought her—Ren-ko Goto, born Ikeda.

The one little start Kiku-ko gave upon recognition of the intruder aroused Lord Yo-Akè. He got to his feet, trembling. A low sob caught his attention—it was not from Kiku-ko.

"Some one to whom my boy was dear is with us," said he.

He peered about him and made out the dim form of a woman arising to her feet. He approached, and touched the scarce seen forehead with trembling fingers. Then he drew himself up with a sharp intonation of the breath. The effort had been so much that he staggered; Ren-ko stretched forth her hand to save him.

Kiku-ko interposed quickly, and slipped her arm beneath her father's to lead him away. Lord Yo-Akè stopped, took Ren-ko's hand and strove to find that of his daughter's. A little evening breeze sprang up, rustling the grass of the grave—to each a whisper came, clear and distinct:

"Lotus and chrysanthemum of mine, your peace, as your sorrow, is on the knees of the gods."

Old, tottering, Lord Yo-Akè joined the hands of the two.

"I knew the lotus would come to Moto today," said he, simply; "my boy wished it so, and the garden was incomplete—my daughters."

Slowly, supporting him, Lotus and Chrysanthemum wended toward the yashiki until the jewel-hedge hid them from sight.

A moon arose, and drew the outline of the castle walls as fine as the thread of a melodious samisen against the star-keyed fretboard of Night.

SAYONARA

GLOSSARY

Andon (Ahn-dhon) A paper-framed night light.
Ayame (Ah-yam-may) Iris.

Baka-fu (Bah-ka-foo) Administrative council.
Banzai (Bahn-zai) Live forever.
Besso, A villa.
Biwa (Bee-wah) Lute—name of great lake near Kiyoto.
Bu, Coin—a quarter of a Ryo (Yen).
Bushido (Bu-she-do) Chivalry.

Daimio (Dai-me-yo) Prince.
Daisho (Dai-sho) Two-sworded warrior.

Fuda (Foo-dah) Amusement placard—posters.
Fudai Daimio (Foo-dai) Hereditary prince.
Fusima (Fu-su-ma) Sliding door between rooms.
Futon (Fu-tong) Mattress.

Geisha (Gay-sha) A public entertaining girl.
Geta (Gay-tah) Wooden clogs.
Godowns, Oriental term for warehouse.

Hanashika (Hana-shee-kah) Professional story teller.
Hibatchi (Hee-batchee) A brazier.
Hokan (Ho-kahn) Male jester.
Hoku No Kami, Lord of the North.
Hyaku (High-yaku) Hurry, quickly.

Ihai (E-high) Ancestral tablet.
Irasshai (E-ras-shy) Welcome.
Ishiyama (E-she-yah-mah) A mountain—one of the eight points of interest around Kiyoto.

Kago (Kang-o) Basket palanquin or carried vehicle.
Kakemono (Kah-kee-mo-no) A hanging picture.
Kasa (Kah-sah) Umbrella.
Kirei (Kee-ray) Pretty.
Koku (Ko-ku) Five-bushel rice measure,
Kom Ban Wa (Koom-ban-wah) Good evening.
Koro (Ko-ro) Incense burner.
Ko Tansu (Ko-Dansu) Small chest of drawers.
Koto (Ko-to) Musical instrument.
Koya (Ko-yah) Amusement booth.
Kuge (Koo-gay) Court noble.

Matsuri (Mat-suree) Festival.
Meido (May-doh) Unknown.
Meiji (Mey-gee) Period 1868 to 1911.
Miidera (Me-e-deerah) One of the eight points of interest around Lake Biwa.
Mitsu Awoi (Meet-su ah-woy) Three holly-hock leaves.
Mokusei (Moke-sey) Fragrant Osmanthus flowers.
Mukojima (Moo-koh-gee-mah) Name of Cherry Avenue at Tokyo.

Nagaya (Nang-eye-yah) Barracks.
Nakauri (Nah-kah-oo-ree) Theater vendor and guest welcomer.
Nippon (Nee-pohn) Japan.
Nori Mono (No-re-mo-no) Enclosed palanquin—carried vehicle.

Obi (Oh-bee) Woman's wide sash.
Oiiran (Oy-ran) Prostitute of first class.
Omon (Oh-mon) The great gate.
Oni (Oh-nee) Devils or evil spirits.
Oyasumi Nasai (Oh-yah-soo-mee nah-sigh) Good night.

Ri (Ree) About two and one-half miles.
Ronin (Roe-nin) Masterless samurai (roving knights).

Sake (Sackey) Native wine.
Samisen (Sahm-sen) Musical instrument.
Samurai (Sam-mu-rai) A knight.
Sancho (San-sho) Japanese fragrant pepper.

Sanpan, Oriental term for boat.
Satsuma (Sat-soo-mah) A powerful clan.
Sayonara (Sai-yo-nara) Goodbye.
Seppuku (Sepoo-ku) Act of disemboweling.
Sesshu (Sess-shu) Name of a celebrated artist.
Shogun (Sho-guhn) Military ruler.
Shoji (Sho-gee) Outer sliding paper doors.
Singakuji (Seng-gah-koo-gee) Burial place of the 47 ronins.
Susuki (Su-su-kee) Autumn grass.
Sumida (Su-mee-dah) River in Tokyo.

Tai (Tie) The Japanese king of fishes.
Taiko Yagura (Tie-ko-yah-gu-rah) Drum turret.
Tama Gaki (Tah-ma-gah-kee) Jewel Hedge—Tree-grown ramparts.
Tatami (Tah-tam-mee) Floor mats.
Tenshu, Castle tower.
Tobakobon (Tobak-o-bohn) Smoker's cabinet.
Tokonoma (Toe-ko-no-mah) Decorative recess in guest room.
Tono Sama (Toe-no-sah-mah) The daimio or great master.
Toro (Toe-roe) Lantern.

Uji No Mitama (Oo-gee-no-mee-ta-mah) "By the treasures of my ancestors."

Yakunin (Yak-oo-nin) An official.
Yashiki (Yash-key) The master's house.
Yadoya (Yadoyah) An inn or hotel.
Yen, Japanese money equal to about 50 cents in our coin.
Yo-Ake (Yo-ah-key) Dawn.
Yose (Yo-sey) Place of entertainment.
Yoshiwara (Yoshee-warah) Public prostitute district.
Yujo (Yu-jo) Prostitute.

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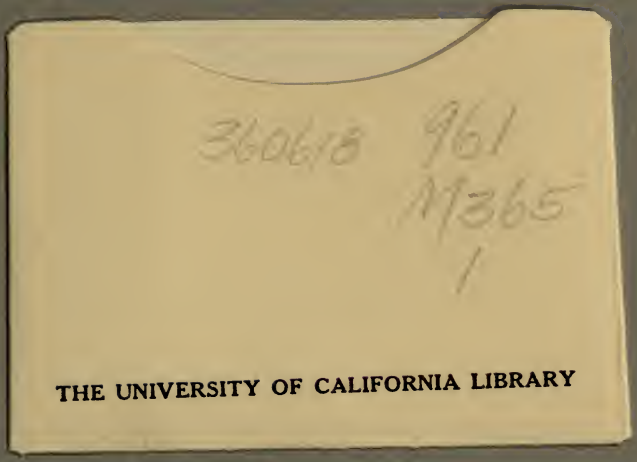
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